

REFLECTIONS AND MEDITATIONS

SELECTED FROM

THE WRITINGS OF FENELON;

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

BY

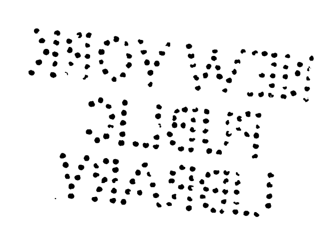
J. R. G. HASSARD, ESQ.

AND AN INTRODUCTION,

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PREFACE.

THE meditations selected from the writings of Fenelon, will, no doubt, commend themselves to all Christian readers. A charming simplicity and sweetness of style are united to a real spirituality, such as the true faith alone could produce or mature. The brief memoir contained in this volume is, perhaps, the best view which could be given of a life really great and good, notwithstanding its shadows and dangers. It places in a short compass all the principal events of Fenelon's career, and gives a just appreciation of his virtues. It is not too much to say that many trials, and even errors renounced, were made the means of advancing him in the love of God, and in detachment from the charms of the world. He possessed characteristics which would have made him popular among men, and given him great power as a courtier.

But God, who had seen his danger, and who had greater designs for him, withdrew him from the snares of the court, as well as from the flattery of men. The errors into which he fell were not embraced maliciously, and at the voice of the Arbiter of all truth were immediately and completely abandoned. Many who admire his writings and eulogize his course, have no proper idea of the true source of his greatness. He has often been quoted among Protestants as in many respects a model for imitation, while his works have been translated and circulated with eagerness, as if there could be found in them some indirect attack against our holy religion. One thing, however, is certain: the opponents of the Catholic Church could find no better adversary than Fenelon, and no life more opposed to their teachings than his. His whole merit consisted in obedience to that faith which alone can enlighten or sanctify. Would to God that all who profess to admire him, would imitate any of the features of his life. There are many who enjoy the reflections of Fenelon, as they do the chapters of

Thomas a Kempis, because they carry with them such a weight of truth and power of unction that they force conviction. The soul, too, naturally yearns after God, and something real and soild in religion, and it fails to find its need among those who are ever teaching negatively, who are always pulling down, and never building up. We are only too happy when the works of our masters of the spiritual life are placed in the hands of Protestants. Even though they may be altered or expurgated of their vital points, the life that is in them still has its power, and many conversions have been effected by these means. We only desire to bring our teachings within the reach of our countrymen. If we can induce them to look candidly at our system and its divine fabric of dogma and morals, we are sure the earnest and good will be attracted and perhaps persuaded. We can argue from the effect to the cause, and from the wants of man's noble nature, to the perfection of the merciful scheme which Infinite Love has contrived for our redemption. The faithful reader of A Kempis or Fenelon, or any of our spiritual writers,



will soon be led to seek the foundation on which such moral structures have been built. If he learn to love the fruit, he will soon seek the parent tree which is ever laden with the golden stores of its fertility. No system of error could produce such fruit; no theology of negations could mature or support any really saintly character. Catholics know how to appreciate the virtues of Fenelon, and to give him his just place among the children of that mother who is ever young, and ever fruitful, who is all glorious within, "clothed round about with varieties." Much has been said of the spirit of kindness and conciliation which distinguished Fenelon, and gave beauty to his character, while it added to his power of convincing his adversaries. This, no doubt, was a great instrument in the work of good he was destined to do. But such sweetness and love are the fruit of the Catholic religion, which, while it will never abate one jot or tittle of its ever certain confession, is always tender and compassionate to the souls of men. Would that those who accuse us of severity could understand this truth. The Catholic priest-

hood, which labors in the waste of the world to reduce the nations to the obedience of faith, has nothing to gain but the good of mankind, for which it has renounced all earthly ends. It cannot yield one farthing of the divine treasure of faith, but its heart is ever open to the earnest and true, to the pilgrim to a better country.

As it regards the errors into which Fenelon was led, they were not, as we have observed, maliciously embraced, and they were also completely renounced. The clear-sighted and unflinching Bossuet saw at once the danger, and turned the power of his eloquence against its progress. Had Fenelon persevered in the error, there is no way of calculating the evil he might have wrought, or the souls he might have led into misery. It was no heroic ac' on his part to submit to the decision-of the father of the faithful, whose voice every good Christian is bound at once to obey. But his immediate obedience and childlike renuncia-tion of his error gained for him the grace of God, and opened upon him the light of heaven, which always comes to the obedient.

These words will be, then, sufficient to introduce meditations and reflections well known among Protestants as well as Catholics. Let the reader seek for the spirit which dictated them, and follow the truth which they inculcate. He will find that they will help him to the better knowledge of that one faith, of which on earth the Holy Church is the only pillar and ground.

T. S. P.

NEW YORK, *August* 29, 1864.

MEMOIR OF FENELON.

MEMOIR OF FENELON.

FRANCOIS DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTHE FENELON was born at the chateau of Fenelon, in Perigord, France, on the 6th of August, 1651. He was the son of Pons de Salignac, count of La Mothe Fenelon, and belonged to a family which had long occupied a distinguished place among the nobility of the kingdom.

It was his good fortune to be brought up under the eyes of an affectionate and virtuous father, who spared no pains to fill his heart with the love of God, and instruct his mind in all the learning suitable to his age and condition. From childhood he displayed that calm religious spirit and gentleness of disposition, which were so conspicuous in his after life and in his writings. In his secular studies he made the most remarkable progress. The best of the Greek and Latin authors were familiar to him at so tender an age, that it may almost be said his earliest reading was in the ancient classics. At the age of twelve he was



sent to the university of Cahors, where he began the study of philosophy; but he had not been long at this institution when his uncle, the Marquis of Fenelon, took him to Paris, and placed him at the celebrated college on Plessis. Under the care of his excellent relative, the young student continued to increase in virtue and sound learning. The Church had already been chosen for his profession, and he was still quite a boy when he began his course of theology. At the age of fifteen he preached his first sermon in public, according to a custom of the day, which permitted young candidates for the priesthood to prepare themselves, by frequent and early practice, for the duty of instructing their people in the lessons of the Gospel. Bossuet, destined to be one of Fenelon's dearest friends and bitterest rivals, had made his first appearance in the pulpit at the same age.

The applause which followed young Fenelon's boyish effort, far from gratifying the Marquis, filled that pious nobleman with alarm. He hastened to withdraw his nephew from the seductions of the world and temptations to vanity, and sent him to the seminary of St. Sulpice, then under the direction of the celebrated Abbé Tronson. At the age of twenty-four he received holy orders.

He earnestly desired at first to devote himself to foreign missions, and at one time contemplated a voyage to Canada; but the delicate state of his health and the persuasions of his uncle induced him to relinquish this design. Next he turned his attention toward the East. "The whole of Greece," he wrote, "opens before me, and Mohammedanism recoils before me; the Peloponnesus breathes again in liberty; the Church of Corinth flourishes once more; the voice of the Apostle is heard there again. I seem to be transported to those enchanting places, and those precious ruins, where, while I collect the most curious relics of antiquity, I imbibe also its spirit. I visit the Areopagus, where St. Paul declared to the sages of the world the unknown God! But next to what is sacred, I am delighted with what is profane; and I disdain not to descend to the Piræus, where Socrates drew up the plan of his republic. I reach the double summit of Parnassus; I pluck the laurels of Delphi; I revel in the charms of Tempe.

"When will the blood of the Turks mingle with that of the Persians on the plains of Marathon, and leave the whole of Greece to religion, to philosophy, and the fine arts, who regard her as their country?

'Arva beata,
Petamus arva, divites et insulas.'

"Nor will I forget thee, O thou happy island, consecrated by the celestial visions of the beloved disciple! O happy Patmos! I will kneel upon the earth, and kiss the steps of the Apostle, and I shall believe that the heavens open on my sight. I behold the downfall of schism, and the union of the East and West, and the day-spring again dawning in Asia, after a night of such long darkness. I behold the land which has been sanctified by the steps of Jesus, and watered by His blood, delivered from its profanation and clothed anew in glory; and I behold also the children of Abraham, scattered over the face of the globe, and more numerous than the stars of heaven, assembled from the four quarters of the earth, coming to acknowledge Christ whom they pierced, and to show the resurrection to the end of time."

This project, too, was given up; and indeed it is impossible to read the foregoing letter without feeling that, despite the flavor of piety which pervades it, Fenelon had little of the true missionary spirit. If the thought of Greece reminds him of St. Paul, it reminds him quite as often of Homer and Demosthenes; if he burns to visit those lands sanctified by the labors of the Apostle of the Gentiles, it is not only that he may preach and suffer for

God's glory, and work his best for the salvation of men's souls, but also that he may gratify his poetic instincts in beholding the classic scenes of Pagan story, and the spots consecrated by his favorite poets.

Attached to the seminary was the parish church of St. Sulpice, and here he passed three years as a catechist and preacher, acquiring some reputation as a pulpit orator, and a still more enviable celebrity as a zealous, charitable, and kind-hearted priest. He was, before long, appointed director of the *Nouvelles Catholiques*, a community of women, founded, under the protection of the king and Marshal Turenne, for the purpose of strengthening new converts in the faith, and instructing those who showed a disposition to abandon their heresies. In this sort of apostleship, so different from that to which he had fancied himself called a short time before, yet so congenial to his tender disposition, he passed the greater part of ten years.

In the meanwhile, he had formed an intimacy with Bossuet, and sometimes took part in the *Promenades philosophiques* and conferences on the Holy Scripture, which were held under the auspices of that distinguished preacher at St. Germain and Versailles. There was much between them in common. Fenelon

looked up to Bossuet almost as to a master. He sought his advice in his literary works, and submitted his books to him for correction. At the brilliant reunions for which Bossuet's house was celebrated, the modest young abbé soon became a prominent figure. He had already secured the friendship of two virtuous and noble families, those of Beauvilliers and Chevreuse, and for the Duchess of Beauvilliers had written his "Treatise on the Education of Daughters," a work which, though intended only for private hands, was so much admired that several years afterward it was given to the public.

The appearance of this little book was followed the next year (1688) by his *Traité du ministère des pasteurs*, or "Treatise on the Pastoral Mission," in which he pointed out the distinguishing marks of God's chosen ministers, and showed how utterly destitute were all the Protestant sects of a divinely appointed pastorship.

Theology just then was very much in fashion at the French court. The voluptuous Louis XIV., and his mistresses and nobles, used to patronize certain external practices of piety, just as they would any new species of amusement. In the midst of their scandalous lives, they had their pet churches, their pet preach-

ers, their pet hymns, and their pet charitable enterprises. They read a new prayer-book or a new polemical essay with the same eagerness, and about the same profit, that a fashionable lady of the present time reads the last new novel. The Abbé Fenelon's book pleased them hugely. The king expressed his gracious approbation of it, and as he was just then busy in organizing missions among the Huguenots, he resolved to confide to the author the charge of one in the province of Poitou.

The charge was one of peculiar delicacy. It had been the king's policy to treat the Protestants not only as heretics, but as enemies to the State, and while he sent preachers to convince them of their errors, he sent dragoons at the same time to punish their disobedience. Whatever may have been the provocation—and great provocation there certainly had been—there is no question that severity, so far, had only made matters worse. The fanaticism of the Huguenots was thoroughly aroused, and a spirit of rebellion was awakened among them which threatened the most alarming consequences.

Fenelon was presented to the king by his friend Bossuet, and before setting out for the scene of his duties, begged, as a favor, that no violence should be used against the Protes-

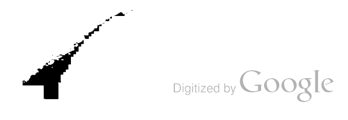
tants of his district. The request was granted. He chose as his assistants the Abbé Fleury, author of the well-known ecclesiastical history, and the Abbé de Langeron, his life-long friend. With the aid of these congenial companions, he attacked the malcontents with the weapons of kindness and conciliation; and such was the influence of their charity, benevolence, and Christian example, that converts flocked to the churches in the most surprising numbers. On his return to Paris, in 1689, Fenelon left the rebellious province perfectly tranquil.

Through the influence of his friend, the Duke of Beauvilliers, he was now appointed tutor to Louis' grandsons, the Dukes of Burgundy, Anjou, and Berry. The first of these young princes, the heir prospective to the crown, was equally distinguished for the quickness of his intellect and the viciousness of his disposition. He was proud, irritable, passionately addicted to every kind of pleasure, cruel, and ferocious. Fenelon saw in him, however, a character which, with proper training, was full of promise. He applied himself zealously to the noble task of forming a wise and virtuous king, and, aided by the excellent Duke of Beauvilliers, who held the office of governor of the young prince, was so successful that his pupil became as remarkable

for his noble and generous qualities as he had previously been for his vices and bad temper.

It was for his use that Fenelon composed his "Dialogues of the Dead," "Direction for the Conscience of a King," "Abridgment of the Lives of Ancient Philosophers," and "Adventures of Telemachus," and translated into French the Æneid of Virgil. The last-named work was not printed, and the manuscript is lost. The Duke of Burgundy rewarded the devotion of his preceptor with the warmest affection, but he did not live to practise on the throne the excellent principles of morality and good government which he had learned from the abbé.

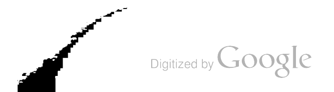
While he was every day gaining the respect of a wider circle of admirers in the Church, at the court, and among the homes of the sick and poor, Fenelon was not liked by the king. Even his important services in the education of the young princes were completely overlooked, and his only income, so far, had been derived from a small living to which he was presented by one of his uncles. It yielded him about 3,000 francs a year, not enough, with his profuse charities, to prevent his often suffering the distress of poverty. At length, in 1694, the influence of Madame de Maintenon procured for him the rich abbacy of Saint Va-



lery, in the diocese of Amiens, and the king, while informing him in person of this preferment, took occasion to apologize for so tardy an acknowledgment of his gratitude. In the following year he was nominated archbishop of Cambrai. He hesitated to accept the dignity, for he was unwilling to break off his connection with the young princes. "And you shall not do so," said the king; "the canons only require a bishop to live nine months in the year at his see. Three months you shall devote to my grandchildren at Versailles, and the rest of the year you will superintend their education at Cambrai." Fenelon accepted this proposal, and the ceremony of consecration was performed at Saint Cyr on the 10th of July, 1695, Bossuet being one of the officiating prelates.

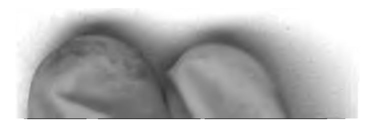
A few years before this event Fenelon had become acquainted with a pious widow, who, by her writings and by spiritual conferences, which she was in the habit of holding with ladies of rank, had caused no little excitement among religious people. Madame Guyon was an amiable enthusiast, who, having lost her husband at an early age, felt called upon to serve God in some extraordinary way. She wrote a "Short and Easy Method of Prayer," a commentary on certain parts of the Bible,

and several other mystical works, and organized religious meetings, in which she expounded her peculiar views regarding the interior life. This was just after the writings of Michael de Molinos, the founder of the Quietists, had been condemned as heretical. Molinos taught that perfect contemplation of God is a state wherein one neither reasons nor reflects, but passively receives the impression of heavenly light. This state of mental inaction, so entirely inconsistent with the practice of the virtues of faith, hope, and love, he called *quiet*. A soul which had attained this condition, neither feared hell nor desired salvation. The vilest thoughts, as well as the most devout aspirations, became equally indifferent to it, and the use of the sacraments and performance of good works were matters for which it had no care. Horrible as these doctrines were, they found many followers, and Madame Guyon was suspected of favoring them to a certain extent. Though she always professed —no doubt sincerely—a readiness to submit to the decision of the Church, she went so far toward Quietism, as to teach that in the state of perfect contemplation the soul resigns itself so entirely to the will of God as to care not whether it be damned or saved. About the time that Fenelon was sent on his mission to



Poitou, she was arrested and confined for eight months in a convent. Released at the intercession of Madame de Maintenon, she met Fenelon on his return to Paris, and used every effort to convert him to her way of thinking. If she failed to do that altogether, she at least inspired him with a lively interest in her, and by his advice submitted her doctrines to Bossuet, then esteemed the greatest theologian in France. Bossuet marked several passages which he considered dangerous. Fenelon saw in them only inexactitude of expression. A commission composed of Bossuet, Cardinal de Noailles, and M. Tronson, superior of Saint Sulpice, met at Issy to determine the questions in dispute, Fenelon pledging himself in advance to accept their decision, whatever it might be. They were still in session when he was appointed archbishop of Cambrai, and was thereupon admitted to their deliberations. Thirty-four articles, containing the sound maxims of a spiritual life, were agreed upon and published by them in 1695. Although they did not expressly censure Madame Guyon, they condemned some of her doctrines by implication, and soon afterward she was again imprisoned.

Bossuet, however, was not yet satisfied. Madame Guyon had been permitted to dissem-



inate her views at the royal female seminary at Saint Cyr. Bossuet preached a series of conferences there to counteract her influence, and not only her writings but those of Fenelon were prohibited in the establishment. During the discussion at Issy, the bishop and the archbishop had several disputes on the subject of disinterested love of God, or what theologians call the love of pure benevolence. Fenelon held that perfect love is that by which the creature loves God for His own sake alone, without reference to the happiness it may hope for in enjoying Him, or to gratitude for His past favors. Bossuet believed that such a love is chimerical, the soul never tending toward God except with the love of chaste desire, which yearns to possess and enjoy Him. To set forth this opinion, and at the same time to assail more vigorously the errors of the Quietists and Semi-Quietists, he composed his "Pastoral Instruction on the Different States of Prayer," and asked Fenelon to give his approbation to it. The latter, after some hesitation, refused. Bossuet was highly displeased. The archbishop of Cambrai published a justification of his course, and soon afterward gave to the world his "Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints," in which he developed, more fully than he had previously



done, his own opinions on mystical theology. Unconsciously, he fell into nearly the same errors as Madame Guyon. Bossuet hastened to the king, descanted on the danger to religion from the publication of such a book, and begged pardon for not having revealed to him sooner the archbishop's "fanaticism." Louis, who had never liked Fenelon, was perhaps glad of an excuse to turn against him; he struck his name from the list of tutors to the royal family, and ordered him to retire to Cambrai. The court resolutely turned its face away from the disgraced prelate. The Abbé de Rancé, the celebrated reformer of the Trappists, wrote several letters to Bossuet, severely condemning the "Maxims of the Saints." The letters were published, and the high reputation of their writer was enough to prejudice the public still more generally against Fenelon and his book. The controversy aroused an universal interest, which, at this distance of time, seems surprising. Fenelon adopted the course which of all others must raise him the most in the opinion of posterity. He defended himself with tact and good temper against the charges of heresy and the still more galling imputations of immorality, which his opponents brought against him; but meanwhile he submitted his book to the Pope, and humbly

asked from the one infallible tribunal on earth a decision as to its orthodoxy. Innocent XII. placed it in the hands of ten theologians to be examined; but the Bossuet party in France were nor content to wait for their verdict. Louis wrote to the Pope, begging him to censure that "bad and mischievous" work. Bossuet published, in 1698, his *Relation du Quietisme*, in which he compared Fenelon to the heresiarch Montanus, and Madame Guyon to the infamous Priscilla. The Roman Theologians, after sixty-four meetings for deliberation, were unable to agree; the matter was then submitted to the congregation of cardinals of the Holy Office. In the mean time the Sorbonne had condemned the obnoxious book, and the controversy waxed every day more bitter and more personal. Personal, at least, so far as one party was concerned; Fenelon always spoke of his adversaries in the kindest and most charitable spirit. Some one advised him to retort by attacking Bossuet's sentiments, and convict him of establishing theological hope by destroying charity; but he replied that he would never inflame a dispute by recriminating against a brother. "Believe me," he says, in one of his published letters to Bossuet, "we have been too long a spectacle to the world, an object of derision to the un-

godly, of compassion to the good. That other men should be men, is not surprising; but that the ministers of Jesus Christ, the angels of the Church, should exhibit such scenes to the profane, to the unbeliever, calls for tears of blood. How much more fortunate would have been our lot, if, instead of thus consuming our time in interminable disputes, we had been employed in our dioceses in teaching the catechism, in instructing the villager to fear God and bless His holy name!"

The decision of Rome was at length announced, March, 1699. Twenty-three propositions contained in the "Maxims of the Saints" were declared rash, offensive to pious ears, pernicious in practice, and some of them erroneous. At the same time the Pope addressed to certain prelates, who had been most officious in procuring the condemnation, the following caustic rebuke: *Peccavit excessu amoris divini, sed vos peccastis defectu amoris proximi*—"He has sinned through excess of divine love, but you have sinned through lack of love for your neighbor."

The news of this decision reached Fenelon just as he was about to ascend the pulpit. Stifling his emotion, and giving a few moments to meditation, he changed the subject of his sermon, and preached upon entire submission

to the authority of superiors. Without waiting for a formal attestation of the decree, he issued a pastoral letter announcing his condemnation. "We shall find consolation, my dearest brethren," said he, "in what humbles us, provided that the ministry of the Word, which we have received for your sanctification, be not enfeebled, and that, notwithstanding the humiliation of the pastor, the flock shall increase in grace before God." "Heaven forbid that we should ever be spoken of, except with the recollection that a pastor thought it his duty to be more docile than the meanest sheep of his flock; and that his submission was unlimited." He never would sanction any further defence of the book, or even of his intention in writing it; and toward the close of his life he renewed the proofs of his submission, by causing to be made for his cathedral a golden ostensory, on which was represented a figure trampling upon some heretical books, one of them bearing the title, "Maxims of the Saints."

Thus ended one of the most celebrated theological controversies ever held in France. Bossuet undoubtedly rendered a great service to religion by his firmness in opposing an error which was all the more dangerous because a man of real virtue was its chief advocate; but

Fenelon rendered the Church a service scarcely less valuable by his admirable example of humility and obedience.

The friends of the archbishop now hoped that he would be recalled to court; but Louis was not prone to forgive any one who had once opposed him; and, beside, he found a fresh cause for displeasure in an incident which which took place about this time.

The "Adventures of Telemachus," written, as I have already said, for the improvement of the Duke of Burgundy, had hitherto never been printed. A dishonest servant, who had been charged with copying the manuscript, sold one of the copies to a bookseller without telling the author's name, and in a very short time the book was in everybody's hands. The authorship was not long a secret. As soon as it was known, the king ordered the work to be suppressed, but it was too late. Surreptitious editions were multiplied, and the presses could hardly keep pace with the public demand—a demand which was due in part to a suspicion then current that the book was a satire on the court.

All hope of restoration to the royal favor was thus destroyed, and Fenelon applied himself with redoubled ardor to the labors of his diocese. The beatiful traits of his character



shone more brightly now, that they were no longer surrounded by the false glare of the court. He loved to visit the poor in their cottages, to share their humble meals, or meet with them in the fields and listen to the story of their sufferings. The diocese of Cambrai was often the theatre of war, but the presence of hostile armies never interrupted his pastoral labors. All parties loved and respected him. English, French, Germans, and Dutch vied with each other in showing him marks of veneration. The generals on each side offered him military escorts through their lines, but these he always refused. He traversed the devastated districts, alleviating as far as he could the distress of the plundered peasants, and taking to his own house those who had been driven from their homes. A poor man, whom he had thus assisted, was lamenting that in making his escape from his cottage he had not time to bring off his cow, the main support of the family. Fenelon, availing himself of the privilege of his safe conduct, immediately set out, accompanied by a single servant, and drove off the cow himself.

"His open house and table," said Saint Simon, "had the appearance of those of a governor of Flanders, and of an episcopal

palace, combined. There were constantly many renowned officers and distinguished soldiers, sick, wounded, or in good health, living with him. All expenses were defrayed by him, and they were served equally, as if there was only one honored guest to attend upon. He himself was usually present at all the medical and surgical consultations. He also exercised toward the sick and wounded the functions of the most charitable pastor; and often went to the houses and hospitals in which the soldiers were lodged, to fulfil the same office. * * * * * A liberality well understood, a munificence which never insulted, was showered alike on officers and men; and although he exercised this unbounded hospitality, his table, furniture, and equipages were within the limits of his station. He gave in secret, with equal eagerness and modesty, all the assistance which could be concealed, and which was incalculable. He used such consideration toward others as to make those upon whom he conferred favors believe that he was the obliged party; and he showed a common politeness to all, so carefully modified that it appeared to each like a mark of personal consideration."

When the region about Cambrai was invaded by the armies of Marlborough and

Prince Eugene, those commanders gave strict orders to respect all the estates of Fenelon, and in a time of great scarcity Marlborough furnished a guard to protect the archbishop's granaries. At a moment when the French troops were almost in a state of starvation, Fenelon saved them by throwing open his storehouses to the government, and refusing to take pay for the grain. He did not wholly escape the ravages of the campaign. His valuable library was burned. "I would much rather," was his only remark, "that this were destroyed, than the cottage of a poor peasant."

To secure for his diocese a zealous and virtuous priesthood was a matter which he had closely at heart. One of his first objects was to found at Cambrai a theological seminary under the care of the Sulpicians; failing in this, he removed thither the seminary already established at Valenciennes. Thus the government of the institution was always under his supervision, and he had an opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with the young men destined to the exercise of the ministry in his diocese. He was a zealous defender of church discipline; severe but just in his treatment of unworthy priests, and especially careful in presenting clergymen to bene-

fices. No pertinacity in solicitation on the part of the most elevated and influential personages, ever induced him to appoint a man to a station for which he had not given proof of fitness. All the priests of his diocese were welcome to his table. He dispensed an elegant hospitality becoming to his rank, but he never touched the delicate repasts which he spread before others, his own food consisting wholly of vegetables. Every Saturday he heard the confessions of all who came to him. A great number of persons were in the habit of writing to him for direction in spiritual matters, and many of the letters which he wrote in reply have been preserved and published.

In the midst of his pastoral labors he still found time for literary pursuits. The controversy on Jansenism was now raging, and he came forward as a zealous defender of the truth, and wrote several important tracts against the Jansenists, beside a pastoral letter on the same subject. The Duke of Orleans having expressed a desire to enter upon a correspondence with him on certain philosophical questions, Fenelon composed his celebrated "Treatise on the Existence of God," in the form of letters. The first three treat of the philosophical arguments for the worship of the Deity, the immortality of the soul, and the

freedom of the will: to these he afterward added others on the truth of the Christian religion, and the authority of the Catholic Church.

He wrote also a series of "Dialogues on Pulpit Eloquence," in which he lays down some excellent principles. "Never write a sermon," he says, "nor learn one by heart. Abstain from divisions and subdivisions; otherwise your discourse will be dry and constrained. Instruct your people in the history of religion—a subject which is but too often neglected." His own preaching is known to have been eloquent and highly effective, though he left no such reputation for oratory as Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon. This, perhaps, was chiefly because he was never called upon to address stately audiences on occasions of special solemnity, as were those great preachers, and never gave such elaborate preparation to his sermons.

While Fenelon, in retirement, was thus devoting himself to sacred duties, he was not forgotten by his pupil, the Duke of Burgundy, whom separation and adversity attached more strongly than ever to his preceptor. To escape the jealous tyranny of Louis XIV., however, the prince was obliged to conceal his correspondence with



his friend. "At last," writes he, "I find an opportunity of breaking the silence which I have been forced to maintain for four years. I have suffered many evils, but one of the greatest was the not being able to tell you what I felt for you during this long interval, and how much my love has increased, instead of being diminished, by your misfortunes. I reflect with delight upon the time when I shall see you again, but I fear that period is still far distant." Fenelon replied from time to time, as occasion offered of doing so with safety. "I speak to you only of God and yourself," said he, "you must not think of me. Heaven be praised! my mind is at peace; my severest cross is not beholding you; but I bear you with me before God in a more intimate form than that of the senses. I would give a thousand lives, as a drop of water, to see you all that heaven intended you to be. Amen, Amen." In 1708, the duke, in going to take command of the army in Flanders, had to pass through Cambrai. To prevent his having a private interview with the archbishop, the king forbade him even to alight from his carriage in that town, and appointed an officer to see that the injunction was observed. Fenelon, however, was waiting at the post-house, where the duke stopped to change horses.

"The crowd surrounding the young prince," says Saint Simon, "were moved at the transports of joy which escaped him, in spite of all restraint, when he beheld his preceptor. He embraced him repeatedly, and the warmth of the glances which he darted into the eyes of the archbishop conveyed all that the king had interdicted, and expressed an eloquence which none could behold without emotion."

About three years after this meeting, the young duke became, by the death of his father, the next in succession to the crown. Louis XIV. was fast failing, and all eyes were now turned upon Fenelon, for no one doubted that he would become prime minister when his pupil became king. "The courtiers and place-hunters," says Lamartine, "who, for twelve years, had kept aloof as from a contagion during his disgrace, crowded to Cambrai upon every possible pretext. Each wished to receive the guarantee of future consideration. He received everybody with that natural grace which caused him to reign by anticipation in every heart, as he already, in effect, occupied every thought." He wrote to the prince to console him for his loss, and to advise him about the future. "You must become," said he, "the father of the people, the consoler of the oppressed, the resource of the



unfortunate, the support of the nation. Discard flatterers, distinguish merit, seek it out, forestall it, learn to bring it into action ; make yourself superior to all, as you are placed above all." He sketched a complete scheme of political reform. The term of military service was to be reduced, a peace policy to be followed, a public account rendered of the national finances ; the states-general were to be converted into national assemblies, beside which there should be provincial assemblies possessing authority to regulate the taxes ; the nobility were to be deprived of all feudal authority and privilege ; the mischievous system which made public offices hereditary was to be abolished ; and there were other provisions encouraging commerce and manufactures, inviting foreigners to become citizens, and transferring the right of nominating bishops from the king to the higher clergy or the people. He looked forward to the coming reign as a golden age for France, but God willed other wise. The Duke of Burgandy died suddenly, before his grandfather. "All my ties are broken," cried the afflicted archbishop ; "there is no longer any thing to bind me to the earth !" His two friends, the Dukes of Beauvilliers and Chevreuse soon afterward expired, and were followed to the grave by the last of all who

had been dear to him, the Abbé de Langeron, his pupil and confidant. To one who condoled with him in this last sorrow he wrote an account of the abbé's last moments. "I tell you all this," he added, "that I may not trouble you with my distress, without at the same time showing you the comfort which faith affords in grief, of which Saint Augustine speaks, and which God has, upon this occasion, permitted me to feel. God has done as He thinks best; He has preferred the happiness of my friend to my earthly consolation. I offered up him whom I trembled to lose!"

While enfeebled by sorrow and anxiety, a severe shock, caused by the upsetting of his carriage on New Year's day, 1715, threw him into a fever. The last letter which he wrote with his own hand was to the Duchess of Beauvilliers: "We shall soon," said he, "find again that which we have lost; we daily approach it with rapid strides; yet a little while, and there will be no more cause for tears." As he felt his last hour approaching, he begged some one to read to him from the canticles of the Church. "Repeat that passage again," he exclaimed, when something particularly touched him. "Again, again! I can never hear enough of these divine words." "Lord," he once cried, "if I am still neces-



sary to Thy people, I refuse not to labor for the rest of my days. Thy will be done!" The next morning, the 7th of January, 1715, with all the consolations of the Church, he joyfully expired.

SELECTIONS FROM FENELON.



SELECTIONS

FROM

FENELON.

UPON THE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, DRAWN FROM A VIEW OF NATURE, AND OF THE MIND OF MAN.

I cannot open my eyes without admiring the skill that everything in nature displays. A single glance enables me to perceive the hand that has made all things. Men accustomed to meditate upon abstract truths, and recur to first principles, recognize the Divinity by the idea of him they find in their minds. But the more direct this road is, the more is it untrodden and neglected by common men, who follow their own imagination. It is so simple a demonstration, that from this very cause, it escapes those minds that are incapable of a purely intellectual operation. And the more perfect this way of discovering the Supreme Being is, the fewer are

the minds that can follow it. But there is another method less perfect, and which is adapted to the capacity of all. Those who exercise their reason the least, those who are the most affected by their senses, may at a single glance discover Him who is represented in all his works. The wisdom and power that God has manifested in everything that he has made, reflects the name, as in a mirror, of Him, whom they have not been able to discover in their own minds. This is a popular philosophy, addressed to the senses, which every one without prejudice or passion is capable of acquiring.

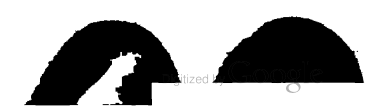
A man whose whole heart is engaged in some grand concern might pass many days in a room attending to his affairs, without seeing either the proportions of the room, the ornaments on the chimney, or the pictures that surrounded him. All these objects would be before his eyes, but he would not see them, and they would make no impression upon him. Thus it is that men live. Every thing presents God to them, but they do not see him. He was in the world, and the world was made by him; and nevertheless the world has not known him. They pass their lives without perceiving this representation of the Deity; so completely do the fascinations of life obscure their vision.

Saint Augustin says that the wonders of the

universe are lowered in our estimation by their repetition. Cicero says the same thing. " Forced to witness the same things every day, the mind as well as the eye is accustomed to them. It does not admire, or take any pains to discover, the cause of events that it always observes to take place in just the same way; as if it were the novelty rather than the grandeur of a thing that should lead us to this investigation."

But all nature shows the infinite skill of its Author. I maintain that accident, that is to say, a blind and fortuitous succession of events, could never have produced all that we see. It is well to adduce here one of the celebrated comparisons of the ancients.

Who would believe that the Iliad of Homer was not composed by the effort of a great poet, but that the characters of the alphabet being thrown confusedly together, an accidental stroke had placed all the letters precisely in such relative situations, as to produce verses so full of harmony and variety; painting each object with all that was most noble, most graceful, and most touching in its features; in fine, making each person speak in character, and with such spirit and nature? Let any one reason with as much subtlety as he may, he would persuade no man in his senses that the Iliad had no author but accident. Why then should a man possessing



his reason, believe with regard to the universe, a work unquestionably more wonderful than the Iliad, what his good sense will not allow him to believe of this poem? But let us take another comparison, which is from Gregory Nazianzen.

If we heard in a room behind a curtain, a sweet and harmonious instrument, could we believe that accident produced it? Who would doubt seriously whether some skilful hand did not touch it?

Were any one to find in a desert island a beautiful statue of marble, he would say, Surely men have been here. I recognize the hand of the sculptor; I admire the delicacy with which he has proportioned the body, making it instinct with beauty, grace, majesty, tenderness, and life. What would this man reply, if any one were to say to him, No, a sculptor did not make this statue. It is made, it is true, in the most exquisite taste, and according to the most perfect rules of symmetry; but it is accident that has produced it. Among all the pieces of marble, one has happened to take this form of itself. The rains and the wind detatched it from the mountain; a violent storm placed it upright upon this pedestal, that was already prepared and placed here of itself. It is an Apollo as perfect as that of Belvidere; it is a Venus equal to that of the Medicis; it is a Hercules

which resembles that of Farnese. You may believe, it is true, that this figure walks, that it lives, that it thinks, that it is going to speak. But it owes nothing to art, it is only a blind stroke of chance that has formed it so well, and placed it here.

What should we say to a man who should pride himself upon superior knowledge and philosophy, and, who entering a house, should maintain that it was made by chance, and that art and industry had done nothing to render it a commodious habitation for men; and who should give as a reason, that there were caverns that resembled it, which the art of man had not made?

We should show to him who reasoned in this way, all the different parts of the house and their uses. It must be, we should say to this philosopher, that this work has been conducted by some able architect; for all parts of it are agreeable, pleasing to the eye, well proportioned, convenient; he must also have employed excellent workmen. Not at all, this philosopher would say; you are ingenious in self-deception. It is true that the house is pleasant, well proportioned, and commodious, but it is self-formed, with all its ingenious contrivances. Chance has collected and arranged these stones in this beautiful order. It has raised these walls.



pierced these windows, placed the staircases. Do not believe that the hand of man had anything to do with it. Men have only occupied it when they found it finished. They imagine it is made for them, because they find in it things that they can turn to their accommodation; but all that they attribute to the design of an architect, is only the effect of their inventions afterwards. This house, so regular and so well arranged, was made just as caverns are made; and finding it convenient, they have occupied it just as they would a cave that they should happen to find under a rock, during a storm, in the midst of a desert.

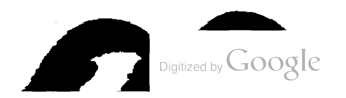
What would you think of this whimsical philosopher, if he were to persist in it seriously, that this house did not discover any art? When we read the fable of Amphion, who by a miraculous harmony raised the stones one upon another, in order and symmetry, to form the walls of Thebes, we smile at the fiction of the poet; but this fiction is not so incredible as that which this philosopher maintains. But why do we smile less at hearing that the world is a work of chance, than we do that this fabulous house is. We do not compare the world to the cavern which we suppose made by accident, but we may to a house in which is displayed the most perfect architecture. The smallest animal

has a construction that is more admirable than that of the most perfect house.

A traveller entering Saïde, which is the place that was once ancient Thebes, with its hundred gates, and which is now a desert, would find there columns, pyramids, obelisks, and inscriptions in unknown characters. Would he say, Men have never inhabited this place; the hand of man has never been employed here; it is chance that has formed these columns, and placed them upon their pedestals, and crowned them with capitals in such beautiful proportions; it is chance that has hewn these obelisks out of single stones, and that has engraved upon them all these hieroglyphics? Would he not, on the contrary, say with all the certainty of which the mind of man is capable, these magnificent ruins are the remains of a majestic architecture that flourished in ancient Egypt?

This is what our reason would pronounce at the first glance. It is the same thing when we first contemplate the universe. People perplex themselves with sophistry, and obscure their view of the simplest truths. But a glance is sufficient; such a work as this world could not have been made by chance.

The bones, the tendons, the veins, the arteries, the nerves, the muscles, which compose the body of a single man, display more art and

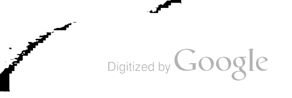


proportion than all the architecture of the ancient Greeks and Egyptians. The eye of the meanest animal surpasses the skill of all the artisans in the world.

But let us, before we proceed to the details of nature, fix our attention for a while upon the general structure of the universe. Cast your eyes upon the earth that supports us; raise them then to this immense vault of the heavens that surrounds us; these fathomless abysses of air and water, and these countless stars that give us light. Who is it that has suspended this globe of earth? who has laid its foundations? If it were harder, its bosom could not be laid open by man for cultivation; if it were less firm, it could not support the weight of his footsteps. From it proceed the most precious things; this earth, so mean and unformed, is transformed into thousands of beautiful objects, that delight our eyes; in the course of one year, it becomes branches, buds, leaves, flowers, fruits, and seeds; thus renewing its bountiful favors to man. Nothing exhausts it. After yielding for so many ages its treasures, it experiences no decay, it does not grow old, it still pours forth riches from its bosom. Generations of men have grown old and passed away, while every spring the earth has renewed its youth. If it were cultivated, it would nourish a hundred-fold more than it now does.

The inequalities of the earth add to its beauty and utility. "The mountains have risen, and the valleys descended, in the places where the Lord has appointed." In the deep valleys grows the fresh herbage for cattle. Rich harvests wave in the champaign country Here, ranges of little hills rise like an amphitheatre, and are crowned with vineyards and fruit trees; there, high mountains lift their snow-crowned heads among the clouds. The torrents that pour from their sides, are the sources of the rivers. The rocks, marking their steep heights, support the earth of the mountains, just as the bones of the human body support the flesh. This variety makes the charm of rural scenery, while it is also the means of satisfying all the different wants of men.

Everything that the earth produces is decomposed and returns again to its bosom, and becomes the germ of a new production. Everything that springs from it returns to it, and nothing is lost. All the seeds that we sow in it return multiplied to us. It produces stone and marble, of which we make our superb edifices. It teems with minerals, precious or useful to man. Look at the plants that spring from it. Their species and their virtues are innumerable. Contemplate these vast forests, as ancient as the world; those trees whose roots



strike into the earth, as their branches spread out towards the heavens. Their roots support them against the winds, and are like subterranean pipes, whose office is to collect the nourishment necessary for the support of the stem; the stem is covered with a thick bark, which protects the tender wood from the air; the branches distribute in different canals, the sap which the roots have collected in the trunk. In summer, they protect us with their shade from the rays of the sun; in winter, they feed the flame that keeps us warm. Their wood is not only useful for fuel, but it is of a substance, although solid and durable, to which the hand of man can give every form that he pleases, for the purposes of architecture and navigation. Fruit trees, as they bow their branches towards the earth, seem to invite us to receive their treasures. The feeblest plant contains within itself the germ of all that we admire in the grandest tree. The earth, that does not change itself, produces all these changes in its offspring.

Let us notice what we call water; it is a liquid, clear, and transparent body. Now it escapes from our grasp, and now it takes the form of whatever surrounds it, having none of its own. If the water were a little more rarefied, it would become a species of air; the whole face of nature would be dry and sterile.



He who has given us this fluid body, has distributed it with care through the earth. The waters flow from the mountains. They assemble in streams in the valleys, and they flow on in rivers, winding their way through the open country, that they may more effectually water it. At last they empty themselves into the sea, to feed this centre of the commerce of nations. This ocean, that seems an eternal separation of countries, is, on the contrary, the great rendezvous of all nations. It is over this pathless way, across this profound abyss, that the old world has put forth its hand to the new, and that the new supplies the old with its treasures.

The waters circulate through the earth, as the blood does through the human body. Besides this perpetual circulation, there is the ebbing and flowing of the sea. We need not know the cause of this mysterious effect. This we are certain of only, that the sea goes and returns to the same place at certain hours. Who has commanded it to ebb and flow with such regularity? A little more or a little less motion in the waters would derange all nature. Who is it that controls this immense body, with such irresistible power? Who is it that always avoids the too much and the too little? what unerring finger has marked the boundaries for he sea, that through countless ages it has re



spected, and has said to it, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"

If I look up to the heavens, I perceive clouds flying as upon the wings of the wind; bodies of water suspended over our heads, to temper the air and water the thirsty earth. If they were to fall all at once, they would overwhelm and destroy everything in the place where they fell. What hand suspends them in their reservoirs, and bids them fall drop by drop as from a watering-pot?

We have considered the waters; let us notice other bodies of still greater extent. The air is so subtle, so transparent, that the stars at an almost infinite distance pierce through it with their light. We live immersed in the abysses of air, as fishes do in the depths of the waters. As the waters, if they were rarefied, would become a species of air, that would destroy them; so the air would destroy us, if it were more dense and humid. Who is it that has composed the air so exactly for our respiration? What power unseen excites, and stills, so suddenly the tempests of this vast fluid body? From what storehouse are the winds drawn that purify the air, that temper the seasons, and that change the face of the heavens in an instant; wafting the clouds on the wings of the wind, from one edge of the horizon to the other?

Let us fix our attention upon the flame that lights up the stars, and spreads its light over the universe. The mountains vomit the fire that the earth has held in its bosom. This same fire remains unseen in the veins of the flint, and waits for the blow that shall excite it and make it kindle mountains. Mankind have learned the way to obtain it, and subject it to their use, to make it bend the hardest metals, to feed and cherish it in cold climates, to make it take the place of the absent sun. Fire penetrates all seeds; it is as the soul of everything that lives; it consumes all that is impure, and renews what it has first purified. The ancients worshipped fire; they believed that it was a celestial treasure that mankind had stolen from the gods.

But it is time to raise our eyes to the heavens. Who has stretched over our heads this vast and glorious vault? What sublime objects are there! An all-powerful hand has presented this grand spectacle to our vision. It is, says Cicero, in order that we may admire the heavens, that God has formed man differently from other animals. He is made upright, and lifts his head that he may contemplate that which is above him.

What does the regular succession of day and night teach us? The sun has never omitted, for so many ages, to shed his blessing upon us.



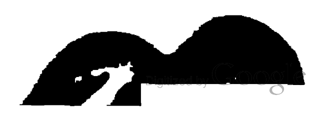
Aurora never fails to announce the day; she appears at the appointed time, and in the fixed place, and the sun, says the Holy Book, knows its going down. Thus it enlightens alternately both sides of the world, and sheds its rays on all. Day is the time for society and employment. Night folds the world in darkness, finishes our labors, and softens our troubles. It suspends, it calms everything. It sheds round us silence and sleep; it rests our bodies, it revives our spirits. Then day returns, and recalls man to labor, and reanimates all nature.

Besides the constant course of the sun that produces day and night, during six months it approaches one pole, and during the other six, the opposite one. By this beautiful order, one sun answers for the whole world. If the sun, at the same distance, were larger, it would light the whole world, but it would consume it with its heat. If it were smaller, the earth would be all ice, and could not be inhabited by men. What compass has been stretched from heaven to earth, and taken such just measurements? The changes of the sun make the variety of the seasons, which we find so delightful. The spring checks the cold winds, wakens the flowers, and gives the promise of fruits. The summer brings the riches of the harvest. The autumn displays the fruits that spring has promised. Winter,

which is the night of the year, treasures up all its riches only in order that the following spring may bring them forth again with new beauty Thus nature, so variously adorned, presents alternately her beautiful changes, that man may never cease to admire.

Let us look up again at this immense concave above us, where sparkle the countless stars. If it be solid, who is the architect? Who is it that has fastened in it, at regular distances, such grand and luminous bodies? Who makes this vaulted sky to turn around us so regularly? If, on the contrary, the heavens are only immense spaces, filled with fluid bodies, like the air that surrounds us, how is it that so many solid bodies float in it without interfering one with another? After so many ages that men have been making astronomical observations, they have discovered no derangement in the heavens. Can a fluid body give such a constant and regular order to the substances that float on its bosom? But what is this almost countless multitude of stars for? God has sown them in the heavens, as a magnificent prince would adorn his garments with precious stones.

But some one may say, These are all worlds, like the earth we inhabit. Suppose it be so, how wise and powerful must He be who has made worlds as innumerable as the grains of



sand on the sea-shore, and who has led on in order, for so many ages, all these moving worlds, as a shepherd leads his flocks! The motion of the stars, it is said, is regulated by immutable laws. I suppose the fact; but it is this very fact that will prove what I wish to establish. Who is it that has given laws to all nature, so constant and so salutary; laws, so simple that people are tempted to believe they establish themselves, so full of utility that we cannot help recognizing in them a miraculous skill? Whence comes the power that conducts this admirable machine of the universe, that is ever moving for us without our thinking of it? To whom shall we attribute this assemblage of so many means, so wonderful and so well arranged, — so many bodies, great and small, visible and invisible? If the least atom of this machine were to become deranged it would disorganize the universe. What is this design, so unlimited, so admirably pursued, so beautiful, so beneficent? The necessity of these laws, far from preventing me from seeking the author, only increases my curiosity and my admiration. The hand that guides this glorious work must be as skilful as it is powerful, to have made it so simple yet so effectual, so constant and so beneficent. I am ready to exclaim in the language of Scripture, — "Every star makes haste to go where God com-

mands it," and when he speaks they answer with trembling, "We are here."

But let us turn our attention to the animals, still more worthy of our admiration than the heavens and the stars. Their species are innumerable. The wings of birds and the fins of fishes are like oars, with which they cleave the waves of air or water, and which conduct the floating body of the bird or fish, that is formed like a boat. But the wings of birds have feathers that are covered with a soft down, that expands in the air, and would grow heavy in the water; but the fins of the fishes are of dry and hard pointed bones, that cut the water without imbibing it, and do not become heavier from being wet. Some birds that swim, as the swan, lift up their wings, and all their plumage for fear of wetting it, and make use of it as sails. They have the art of turning it towards the wind, and tacking like a vessel when it is not favorable.

Among animals, ferocious beasts, such as lions, have the largest muscles in the shoulders, thighs, and legs. These animals are also very supple, nervous, agile, and quick to spring. Their jaw-bones are immense, compared to the rest of the body. They have teeth and tusks, which serve them as terrible arms against their prey. Some animals, like the tortoise, carry

about with them the house in which they were born; others build theirs, like the birds, upon the high branches of trees, to preserve their little ones from being injured by animals without wings. They place their nests amidst the thickest foliage, to hide them from their enemies. The beaver builds for himself an asylum from the very bottom of the water, and raises dikes to secure it from inundation. The fox makes his burrow with two openings, that he may, if surprised, escape the snares of the hunter. Birds, says Cicero, that have very long legs have also long necks, in proportion, so that they can reach the bottom and take their food. The elephant, whose neck would be too heavy if it were as long as the camel's, is provided with a long trunk, which is a succession of nerves and muscles, that it can stretch out and contract, that it can fold up and turn in any way it pleases, to seize anything, or to lift or repulse any object. The Romans call it a *hand.*

Certain animals seem made for man. The dog seems born for his caresses and his service. The horse seems born to carry his burdens, to support him in his weakness, and to obey his will. The ox has the strength and patience that is wanted to drag the plough. The cow refreshes him with her milk. The sheep has a superfluous clothing, which is continually re-

newed, as if to invite man to accept it. Even goats have a sort of long hair which is useless to them, and of which men make stuffs to wear. The skins of animals in cold countries, supply the inhabitants with the most beautiful furs. Thus the Author of nature has clothed the brute creation according to their necessities; and their apparel serves for the use of man.

If any animals appear useless to us, we ought to consider, that whatever makes a part of this grand spectacle of nature is not without its use in the eyes of those who think and attend to it What is there more magnificent than those various republics of animals, all so well governed and different from each other? Everything demonstrates to us, how far the skill of the workman surpasses the vile material that he employs. Everything astonishes me, even the structure of the smallest fly. We find in the most insignificant worm, as in an elephant or in a whale, perfectly organized members. We see in it a head and body, limbs as in the greatest animals; there are, in each part of these living atoms, muscles, nerves, veins, arteries, blood; in this blood component parts and humors; in these humors particles containing in themselves different substances; and we know not where to stop in the infinite process. The microscope discovers to us, in every object, a thousand



things that have escaped our observation. Within these, how many wonders are there that the microscope cannot discover to us! What should we not see if we could continually improve the instruments which we use in aid of our feeble vision! But let our imagination be a sort of microscope, in which we may see in every atom thousands of new and invisible worlds;—it could only present to us new discoveries in the smallest bodies; we should be wearied, and at last we should leave, in the smallest organ, a thousand unknown wonders.

Let us dwell for a while upon the animal machine. Animals have what we call instinct, that enables them to pursue what is useful and avoid what is hurtful. We need not seek to know what this instinct is; let us be contented with the simple fact, without reasoning about it. The lamb knows its mother at a distance. The sheep is conscious of the approach of the wolf before she can see him. There is in all animals a contingent power, that enables them to collect their faculties in an instant, that braces their nerves and renders their joints supple, and that gives them in sudden danger an almost miraculous agility, strength, and adroitness, in escaping from their enemy. It is instinct, it is said, that guides animals. I grant it. It is in truth an instinct; but this instinct is a most admirable

sagacity and dexterity, not in the animals, who have not the power at the time to reason, but in that superior wisdom that directs them.

This instinct, or this wisdom, that thinks and watches over animals in unexpected circumstances when they could not reason, or protect themselves even if they had our reason, can only be the wisdom of the workman who has made the machine. Let us then no longer speak of instinct or nature; these are only empty sounds in the mouths of those who repeat them. There is in what we call nature an instinct, an art, an admirable skill, of which human invention is only the image. This is indubitable: there are in animals an immense number of movements entirely unpremeditated, that are performed according to the most perfect rules of mechanics. It is the machine obeying its laws. This is the fact, independent of all philosophy; and the fact is enough. What should we think of a watch that should be able to defend itself, or escape when any one desired to break it? Should we not admire the skill of the workman? Could we believe that this watch could be formed, proportioned, and arranged by mere chance? Should we think that these operations were satisfactorily explained by saying, It is nature or instinct that makes this watch tell its master the hours, and escape from those who wish to hurt it?

What can be more perfect than a machine that ever renews and repairs itself? As the animal is limited in its strength, it is soon exhausted by labor; but the more it is used, the more it is prompted to compensate its losses by an abundant nourishment. Food restores the waste of every day. A foreign substance enters the body, and, by a strange metamorphosis, becomes a part of it. First, it is ground up and is changed into a liquid; then it is purified, as if it were passed through a sieve in order to separate the parts of it that are too gross. Then it passes to the centre, where it goes through a process, by which it is refined and turned into blood, and at last it flows through innumerable channels, and waters all the members, and insinuates itself through the whole frame; it is filtrated by the flesh as it passes, and finally it becomes flesh itself. So many different solids and liquids become all the same substance. The food which was only an inanimate body, becomes a living animal. What was not long since a horse, is now only a vapor or air. What was only hay or oats, has become that noble, high-spirited animal. He passes for the same animal, notwithstanding this insensible change in his substance.

To nourishment is added sleep. All external motions cease, and even all the interior operations that might agitate and dissipate the spirits,



nothing remains but digestion and respiration; that is to say, everything is suspended that requires effort, and everything necessary for renovation is active and free. This repose, which seems a sort of enchantment, returns every night, while the darkness interrupts labor. Who has contrived this suspension? Who is it that has so well chosen the operations of this machine that ought to proceed, and stopped so wisely those that should be at rest? The next morning all its fatigues have passed away. The animal labors as if he had never labored before, and there is a vivacity and spirit in him that invite to new exertion, in consequence of the renovation.

Let us stop no longer at the inferior animals It is time to study the structure of the human frame; of man, that we may discover Him in whose image he is made. I see in all nature but two kinds of beings; those who have knowledge, and those who have none. Man unites in his nature these two forms of being. He has a body like the most inanimate beings; he has a soul, that is, a power of thought, by which he knows himself and perceives all that is around him. If it be true, that there is a Being who has drawn everything from nothing, man is his true image; for he unites in his nature the perfection of those two forms of being. But the

image is only an image; it can only be a shadow of the truly perfect Being.

Let us begin with the body of man; it is moulded of clay, but let us admire the hand that has fashioned it. The stamp of the workman is imprinted on his work: it seems to have been his pleasure to make of such worthless materials a perfect work. Observe the bones that support the flesh which surrounds them; the nerves that give it strength; the muscles that, by being expanded or lengthened, produce the most certain and regular motions. The bones are separated at certain distances, and are fitted one to another, and fastened by nerves and tendons. Cicero admired, with good reason, the beautiful contrivance that unites the bones. What can be more supple and adapted to different motions; but what is there more firm and durable? Thus, this machine is erect or bent, stiff or flexible, as we wish it.

From the brain, which is the source of all the nerves, flows the vital principle. It is too subtile to be discerned, but nevertheless real, and so active, that it produces all the motions and all the strength of the machine. It flies in an instant to the farthest extremity of the body. Now it moves gently and with uniformity; now with a violent impetuosity; it varies unceasingly, with the different situations of the body.

The flesh is covered in certain parts with a thin and delicate skin for the ornament of the body. In some parts, this skin is harder and thicker than in others, that it may resist the wear upon it; for instance, how much thicker the skin is on the sole of the foot, than the face; on the back part, than on the front of the head. This skin is pierced everywhere like a sieve, with small holes; these are called pores; while the perspiration is insensibly exhaled through them, and the blood never escapes. The skin has all the delicacy necessary to make it transparent, and give to the countenance an animated and beautiful color. Who has tempered and mingled these colors, so as to produce this brilliant carnation that painters admire and vainly endeavor to imitate?

We find in the human body innumerable channels. Some carry the blood from the centre to the extremities, and are called arteries; others return it from the extremities to the centre, and are called veins. Through all these various canals, the blood flows; it is a soft, unctuous liquid, calculated from this quality to preserve the most delicate substances, as we preserve essences in gums. This blood waters the flesh, as rivers water the earth. After being filtered by what it has passed through, it returns to its source slowly, and divested of the vital princi-



ple; but it renews and refreshes itself again, and so circulates perpetually.

Who can explain the delicacy of the organs by which we discover the taste of such a variety of bodies? How is it that so many voices strike my ear at the same time, and produce no confusion, and that after they are gone, these sounds leave with me such lively and distinct resemblances of what they were? With what care has He, who made our bodies, provided our eyes with a moist and moving envelop, to close them with. And why has he left our ears always open? Who is it that paints on my eye in an instant, the heavens, the ocean, the earth? How is it that on such a little organ, faithful images of every object in nature, from the sun to the motes in his beams, are depicted and clearly defined?

This substance of the brain that preserves in order these lively representations of the glorious objects that we see in the universe, is it not a most wonderful thing? We admire with reason the invention of books, in which are preserved the histories of so many facts, and which are the depositaries of so many thoughts. But what comparison is there between the most delightful book, and the brain of a learned man? There can be no doubt that this brain is a far more precious collection, and a much more

beautiful invention, than any book. In this little reservoir, you can find at any moment every image that you desire. You call them, they come. You send them away, they hide themselves, we know not where, and others appear in their place. We open and shut our imaginations as we open and shut a book; as one may say, we turn over its leaves, we pass suddenly from one end of it to the other. We have even tablets in the memory, to indicate the places where certain images may be found. These innumerable characters which the mind can read so rapidly, leave no traces on the brain. If you examine it, you see only a soft substance, a sort of cluster of fine, tender, and twisted threads. What hand has hidden in this apparently shapeless matter, such precious images, and arranged them there in such beautiful order?

But the body of man, that seems the *chef-d'œuvre* of nature, is not comparable to his soul. Whence comes it that beings so unlike are united in his composition? Whence comes it that the movements of the body give so infallibly and so promptly certain thoughts to the soul? How is it that the thoughts of the soul produce certain movements of the body? Whence comes it that this harmonious connection exists without interruption for seventy or eighty years? Whence comes it that two beings possessing



such different operations, make a whole so perfect, that some are tempted to believe that they are one and indivisible?

What hand has united these two extremes? Matter could not make an agreement with spirit. The spirit has no recollection of making any compact with matter. Nevertheless, it is certain, that it is dependent on the body, and that it cannot be freed from its power unless it destroys it by a violent death. This dependence is reciprocal. Nothing is more absolute than the empire of the soul over the body. The spirit wills, and every member of the body is instantly moved, as if it were impelled by some powerful machine. What hand, holding an equal power over both these natures, has imposed this yoke upon them, and held them captive in a connection so nice and so inviolable? Can any one say, Chance? If they do, can they understand what they say themselves, and make others comprehend it? Has chance linked together by a concourse of atoms the particles of body with soul?

My alternative is this; if the soul and the body are only a composition of matter, whence is it that this matter, which did not think yesterday begins to think to-day? Who is it that has given it what it did not before possess, and what is incomparably more noble than itself, when it was

without thought? Does not that which bestows thought, possess it? Suppose even that thought resulted from a certain configuration and arrangement and motion of matter; what workman has discovered these just and nice combinations, so as to make a thinking machine? If, on the contrary, the soul and the body are two distinct substances, what power, superior to both these different natures, has bound them together? Who is it, with a supreme empire over both, has sent forth his command that they should be linked together, by a correspondence and in a civil subjection that is incomprehensible?

The empire of my mind over my body is despotic to a certain extent, since my simple will, without effort or preparation, can move every member of my body by mechanical rules. As the Scriptures represent God, in the creation, to have said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" so the voice of my soul speaks, and my body obeys. This is the power which men, who believe in God, attribute to him over the universe.

This power of the soul over the body which is so absolute, is at the same time a blind one. The most ignorant man moves his body as well as the best instructed anatomist. The player on the lute, who perfectly understands all the chords of his instrument, who sees it with his eyes and

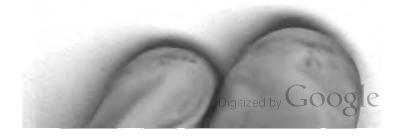


touches it with his fingers, often makes mistakes. But the soul that governs the machine of the human body, can move every spring without seeing it, without seeing or understanding its figure, or situation, or strength, and never mistakes. How wonderful is this! My soul commands what it does not know, what it cannot see, and what it is itself incapable of knowing; and it is infallibly obeyed. How great its ignorance, and how great its power! The blindness is ours; but the power, whence is it? To whom shall we attribute it, if not to Him, who sees what man cannot see, and who gives him the power to perform what surpasses his own comprehension?

The truth is, we cannot admire too much this absolute empire of the soul over the corporeal organs that it does not understand, and the continual use that it makes of it. This is principally shown in recalling images traced on the brain. I am acquainted with all the objects of the universe, that have impressed my senses for a great number of years; I have distinct images of them, so that I can think I see them when they are no more. My brain is a cabinet of pictures, every one of which is brought forward or removed, according to the taste of the master of the mansion. By the portraits which I have in my head, I judge whether the artist's picture

is a faithful representation. It is by consulting them, that I ascertain where are his defects. Such wonders astonish me. I remember distinctly having known that which I no longer know. I recall the face of every person in every age of life, in which I have known them. The same person passes in different forms through my mind. First, I see him a child, then a man, and at last old. I place the wrinkles upon the same face in which I have seen the tender and lovely traits of childhood. I join that which is no more, with what now exists, without confounding their outlines. I preserve in this storehouse a something which has been successively everything I have known since I was born. From this treasure spring all the perfumes, all the harmony, all the tastes, all the degrees of light, all the bright colors, and all their shades; in short, all the forms that have been presented to my senses, and which they have conveyed to my brain.

I recall, when I please, the joy that I experienced thirty years since. It returns, but it is not the same. It appears, but it does not rejoice me. I remember that I was glad, but I am not so at the remembrance. On the other hand, I bring back departed sorrows. They are present with me; for I perceive them just as they were at the time. Nothing escapes me of their bitter-



ness, and of the acuteness of the feeling. But they are not the same thing. They trouble me no longer; they are softened. I see all their severity without feeling it, or if I feel it, it is only as a representation. It is like a scene of a play; the images of past griefs give us pleasure. It is the same with our pleasures. A virtuous heart is afflicted at the recollection of its unworthy pleasures. They are present to us, but they are no longer themselves; such joys return only to bid us weep.

Chance surely never created this wonderful book; all the art of man is unequal to such perfection. What hand has made it?

Let us conclude these remarks by some reflections upon the nature of the mind of man. I find in it an incomprehensible mixture of greatness and weakness. Its grandeur is real. It connects, without confusion, the past with the present, and it penetrates into the future; it has an idea of matter and of spirit; it has within it the idea even of infinity, for it will deny all that does not belong to it, and affirm all that does. Say that infinity is triangular, and it will instantly answer, that what has no limits cannot have any form. Ask it to name the first unit of an infinite number, and it will readily answer, that there can be neither beginning, nor end, nor number, in infinity. It is through the infinite that it comes to the knowledge of the finite.

How glorious is the spirit that is in man; it bears within itself what is far beyond its own comprehension. Its ideas are universal, eternal, and immutable. They are universal: because, when I say, — It is impossible to be and not to be; The whole is greater than a part; A perfectly circular line has no straight parts; Between two given points, the straightest line is the shortest; The centre of a circle is equally distant from all the points in its circumference; — none of these truths can be controverted, there can be no line or circle that does not obey these laws. These truths are of all time, or rather before all time, and will continue beyond it through an incomprehensible duration.

Let the universe be overthrown and annihilated, let there be no minds to reason upon these truths, they will still remain equally true; as the rays of the sun would be no less real, if men should be blind and not see them. In feeling assured, says St. Augustin, that two and two make four, we are not only certain that we say what is true, but we have no doubt that this proposition has been always, and will continue to be eternally true.

These fundamental ideas have no limits, and cannot be changed. What I have advanced of one circle, we acknowledge to be necessarily true of all circles, to infinity. These ideas, that are



illimitable, can never change, or be effaced, or impaired; they are the foundations of our reason. It is impossible, whatever power we may exert over our minds, to make ourselves seriously doubt anything that these ideas represent to us. The idea of infinity is within us in like manner. Change the ideas, and you overthrow reason. Let us learn the greatness of our natures from this immutable idea of infinity that is imprinted within us, and that can never be effaced. But, lest our real greatness should dazzle our eyes, and flatter us to our injury, let us hasten to contemplate our weakness.

The same mind that dwells upon the infinite, and through it sees the finite, is ignorant of all that surrounds it. It does not know itself. It gropes its way through an abyss of darkness. It knows not what it is itself; it does not comprehend how it is chained to this body, nor how it has such an empire over it. It is ignorant of its own thoughts and its own desires; it does not know with certainty what it believes or what it desires. It often deceives itself, and its highest attainment is to understand itself. It joins errors in opinion to a perverted will; and it is often reduced to groan and weep at the experience of its own corruption.

Such is the spirit of man, weak, uncertain, limited, full of imperfections. Who has given

the idea of infinity, that is, of perfection, to a being so short-sighted, so full of imperfection? Has he given to himself this thought, so high, so pure, which is in itself an image of the infinite? Let us suppose that the spirit of man is like a mirror, in which the images of all the surrounding objects are reflected; whence is this image of the infinite that we there trace? How can the image of an unreal object be reflected there? The infinite is there represented, not by a confused mass of infinite objects, which the mind mistakes for the infinite; it is the true infinite that is presented to our thoughts. We understand it well; we recognize it, and distinguish it from all that is not. No subtilty can put any other object in its place. Whence comes this glorious image? Do we draw it out of nothing? Can the finite and limited being invent and imagine the infinite, if it does not exist? External objects cannot give us this image; for they can only give us the images of themselves, and they are all limited and imperfect. Whence do we draw this distinct representation of the infinite, unlike all that we know and all that exists without us? Whence comes it? Where is this infinite that we cannot comprehend, and yet cannot mistake? Where does it dwell? If it did not exist, could it be so engraven in the depths of our souls? But besides this idea of infinity, I

have general and immutable ideas which are the rule of all my judgments; I cannot decide upon any thing without consulting them, and it is out of my power to decide against what they represent to me. My thoughts, far from being able to correct or form this rule, are themselves corrected, in spite of myself, by this superior power and are irresistibly subjected to its decisions.

I cannot, as I before said, doubt that two and two make four, and so of other mathematical truths. I am not free to deny them. This fixed and immutable law is so inwrought, that it seems like my identity; but it is above me, since it corrects, rectifies, and guides me, teaching me my own weakness and imperfection. It is a something, that will ever inspire me, if I listen to it; and I always err, when I do not attend to it.

This principle will guide me right, if I am docile; for this inspiration of the Almighty will enable me to judge of the things that are around me, and on which I am called to decide. And of all other things, it will teach me not to judge, a no less important lesson than the first. This interior guide is what I call my *reason;* but I speak of my reason, without comprehending the full import of the term, as I speak of *nature* and *instinct*, without comprehending what these things are. This law is perfect and immutable.

I am changing and imperfect; I deceive myself, while this never loses its rectitude. When I am undeceived, it is not my reason that changes and returns to the right view, but it is this, which has never departed from it, recalling and forcing me to return to it. It is a controlling power within me, that silences or bids me speak; that makes me believe or makes me doubt; bids me confess my errors or confirms my decisions. In listening to it, I am instructed; in listening to myself, I go astray. This sovereign power is found everywhere; its voice is heard from one end of the universe to the other, by all mankind as it is by me.

Two men who have never seen each other who have never heard each other spoken of, and who have had no communication with any other man that could give them common notions, would speak, at the two extremities of the world, of certain truths in perfect unison. We know perfectly well beforehand in one hemisphere, what answer would be returned in the other, on certain truths. Men of all countries and of all times, whatever education they may have received, necessarily think and speak of some things in the same manner. It is the great Master that has taught us all, who thus bids us speak. Thus, when we think most of our own powers, of ourselves, that is, of our reason, this

is what the least belongs to us, this is most truly a borrowed good.

We are every moment of our lives receiving a reason far superior to ourselves, just as we inhale the air from without, or as we see objects around us by the light of the sun that does not belong to our vision. It is this noble reason that reigns with an absolute dominion, to a certain point, over rational beings. It is this that makes a Canadian savage think many things that Greek and Roman philosophers have thought. It is this that led the Chinese geometricians to the discovery of the same truths that the Europeans, who knew nothing of them, have become acquainted with. It is this that makes men think upon various subjects, just as they thought a thousand years ago. It is this power that gives a uniformity to the opinions of men, the most opposed to each other in their natures. It is by this that men of all ages and countries are bound to an immovable centre, to which they are held by certain invariable laws, which we call first principles; notwithstanding the infinite variety of opinions that are created by their passions, their distractions, their caprices upon all other less clear truths. It is this power that has kept men, depraved as they are, from daring to call virtue vice, and that has obliged them to put on the appearance, at least, of sincerity, modera-

tion, and beneficence, when they would attract esteem.

They cannot esteem or despise anything according to their own arbitrary wills; they cannot force the eternal barriers of truth and justice. The law of the soul, which we call reason, reigns with an absolute sway; its reproaches are ever uttered and repeated at what is wrong; it sets bounds to the folly of the most audacious.

After vice has enjoyed so many ages of unrestrained sway, virtue is still called virtue; and it cannot be dispossessed of its name by its boldest and most brutal enemies. From thence it is that vice, although triumphant in the world, is still forced to disguise itself under the mask of hypocrisy, that it may secure a regard that it does not hope for when it is known as it is. Thus it renders, in spite of itself, homage to virtue, by adorning itself with her charms, that it may receive the honors that are rendered to them. Men cavil, it is true, at the virtuous, and they are, in truth, always liable to censure, for they are still imperfect; but the most vicious men cannot succeed in effacing entirely the idea of virtue. No man has succeeded in persuading others, or himself, that it is more estimable to be deceitful, than to be sincere; to be violent and malignant, than to be gentle and to do good. This inward and universal teacher declares the



same truths, at all times and places. It is true that we often contradict it, and speak with a louder voice; but then we deceive ourselves, we go astray, we fear that we shall discover that we are wrong, and we shut our ears, lest we should be humbled by its corrections. Where is this wisdom, where is this oracle that ever speaks, and against which the prejudices of mankind can never prevail! Where is this noble reason which we are bound to consult, and which of itself inspires us with a desire to hear its voice? Where dwells this pure and gentle light, that not only enlightens eyes that are open to receive it, but uncloses those eyes that were shut, curses those that were diseased, gives vision to the blind; in short, inspires a desire for the light it can bestow, and makes itself beloved even by those who fear it?

Every eye has it; it would see nothing without it; it is by its pure rays alone that it can see anything. As the visible sun enlightens all material bodies, so the sun of intelligence illuminates all minds.

There is a spiritual sun that enlightens the soul more fully than the material sun does the body. This sun of truth leaves no shadow, and it shines upon both hemispheres. It is as brilliant in the night as in the daytime; it is not without that it sheds its rays, it dwells within

each one of us. One man cannot hide its rays from another; whatever corner of the earth we may go to, there it is. We never need say to another, Stand back that I may see it; you hide its rays from me; you deprive me of the portion that is my due. This glorious sun never sets; no clouds intercept its rays, but those formed by our passions. It is one bright day. It sheds light upon the savage in the darkest caverns. There are no eyes so weak that they cannot bear its light; and there is no man so blind and miserable, that does not walk by the feeble light from this source, that he still retains in his conscience.

We believe the instructions of men just in proportion to the conformity we find between them and this inward teacher. After they have exhausted all their reasonings, we still return to this, and listen to the decision it makes. If any one tells me that a part is equal to the whole, I cannot help laughing: such a one cannot persuade me: it is within myself, by consulting this inward teacher, that I must ascertain the truth of a proposition. Far from pronouncing judgment upon this teacher, we are in all cases judged by it. It is disinterested and superior to us. We may refuse to listen to it, and go astray from it; but if we do listen, we cannot contradict it. There seem to be two

kinds of reason within me; one is self, the other superior to it. That which is self, is very imperfect; prejudiced, rash, apt to wander, changing, obstinate, ignorant, and limited; it possesses nothing that is not borrowed. The other, while it is common to all men, is yet superior to them; it is perfect, eternal, immutable, always ready to be communicated, and to reclaim the erring;—given freely to all, inexhaustible and indivisible. Where is this all-perfect reason, so near me, yet so different from me? where is it? where dwells this supreme reason? Is it not God himself?

I find still further traces of the Divinity within me. I have within me a clear idea of a perfect unity, far superior to what I can discover in my own soul; this is often divided between two opinions, between two inclinations, between two opposite habits. This division that I find within me, proves a composition of parts and something more than one. My soul has at least a succession of thoughts, one very different from another. My idea of unity is, if I may use the expression, infinitely more one. I have a conception of a Being who never changes his thought, who has all thoughts at the same instant, who has no succession of ideas. It is doubtless this idea of a perfect and supreme unity in my own mind, that makes me desirous

to find a unity in the soul and even in matter. This idea, ever present to my spirit, must have been born with me. It is the perfect model, of which I am ever seeking the imperfect copy. This idea of what is simply and indivisibly one, can only be the idea of God. I then know God with such certainty, that by this knowledge I seek in every outward thing, and in myself, some resemblance to his unity.

Another mystery that I bear within me, and that renders me incomprehensible to myself, is, that on the one hand I am free, and on the other, dependent. I must be dependent. Independence is the supreme perfection. The Creator must be the cause of all the modifications of his creation. The being who is dependent for his nature, must be so for all its operations. Thus God is the real cause of all the combinations and movements of everything in the universe. It is he who has created all that is. But I am free, and I cannot doubt it; I have an intimate and immovable conviction that I am free to will, or not to will. There is within me a power of election, not only to will or not, but to decide between different objects. This is in itself a proof of the immateriality of my soul. What is material, corporeal, cannot choose; it is, on the contrary, governed by fixed laws, that are called physical, that are

necessary, invincible, and contrary to what I call liberty. In saying, then, that I am free, I say that my will is fully in my power, and that God leaves it to me to use it as I am disposed; that I am not determined by a law, like other beings, but I will of myself. I conceive, that if the Supreme Being were beforehand to inspire me with a will to do right, I have the power to reject the inspiration, however great it might be, to frustrate its effect, and to refuse my consent. I conceive, also, that when I reject his inspiration to do right, I have actually the power not to reject it, just as I have the power to open or shut my eyes.

Outward things may solicit me by all that is most captivating, the most powerful and affecting arguments may be presented to influence me, the Supreme Being may touch my heart with the most persuasive inspirations; but I still remain free to will or not to will It is this exemption from all restraint and from all necessity, this empire over my own actions, that makes me inexcusable when I will what is evil, and praiseworthy when I will what is good.

This is the foundation of all merit or demerit; it is this that makes the justice of reward or punishment. Hence it is that we exhort, reprove, menace, or promise. This is the foun-

dation of all government, of all instruction, and of all rules of conduct. Everything in human life brings us to this conclusion, that there is nothing over which we have such entire control, as our own wills; and that we have this free will, this power of election, between two things equally in our reach. It is this truth that the shepherds sing among the mountains, that merchants and artisans take for granted in their negotiations, that the actor represents on the stage; the magistrate recognizes it in his decisions, and learned doctors teach it in their schools; it is what no man of sense can seriously doubt. This truth, imprinted on our hearts, is acknowledged in the practice of those philosophers who attempt to overthrow it by their chimerical speculations. The internal evidence of this truth, is like that we have of those first principles, which have no need of demonstration, and by which we prove other truths less certain.

Let us view together these equally undoubted truths. I am dependent upon the Supreme Being even for my will; nevertheless I am free. What is this dependent liberty? How can we comprehend a will that is free, and that is yet given by the Supreme Being? I am free in my will, as God is in his. It is in this, principally, that I am in his image, and resemble him. This is a grandeur that belongs to the Infinite

Being, a trait of his celestial natuı⌣. It is a divine power that I possess over my will, but I am only a faint image of his all-powerful will.

My liberty is only a shadow of that of the Supreme Being, from whom I exist, and from whom I act. On the other hand, the power I have of willing evil, is not so much true power, as the weakness and frailty of my will. It is a power to destroy, to degrade myself, to lessen my own perfection and being. On the other hand, the power I have of willing what is right, is not an independent power, as I do not possess it in myself. A borrowed power can only confer a dependent liberty. How then is such a being free? What a deep mystery! Man's liberty, of which I cannot doubt, proves his perfection: his dependence shows the nothingness whence he has been drawn. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth," says God in the Scriptures, "so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

We have thus followed the traces of the Divinity through what are called the works of nature. We may observe at the first glance, an all-powerful hand that is the first mover of everything, in every part of the universe. The heavens, the earth, the stars; plants, animals; our bodies, our spirits, — all discover an order,

a nice arrangement, a skill, a wisdom, far superior to our own, which is the soul of the whole world, and which conducts everything to its destined end, with a gentle and insensible, but all-powerful sway. We have seen, if we may so speak, the architecture of the universe, the just proportion of all its parts; and one look is enough to discover to us, in an insect yet more than in the sun, a wisdom and a power that shine forth in its meanest works.

These are views that would strike the most ignorant. What would be our impressions, if we could enter the secrets of the material world; if we could dissect the internal parts of animals, and observe their perfect mechanism! Everything, then, in the universe bears the marks of the Divinity, and man more than all the rest. Everything discovers design to us, and a connection of second causes, directed by a first cause. We have no ground to cavil at this great work; the defects that we discover in it, are produced by the ill-regulated, but free will of man.

It often happens, that what appears like a defect to our limited vision, viewed separately from the whole, gives a beauty to the general design, for the perception of which we do not possess that enlargement and simplicity of mind, by which alone we could comprehend the per-

fection of the whole. Does it not often happen, that we hastily condemn parts of the works of men, because we have not sufficiently penetrated into the whole extent of their designs? If the characters of the Holy Scriptures were of such immense size, that each letter looked at near, would nearly fill our vision, we could only see one at a time, and we could not read, that is to say, collect the letters, and discover the sense of the whole. It is the same with the great features of the providence of God, delineated in the government of the world for so many ages. It is only the whole that can be intelligible, and the whole is too vast for a near view. Every event is a particular character, which is too great for the smallness of our organs, and which means nothing if it is separated from the others.

When we shall see God as he is, and see all the events of human life from the first to the last day, in all their proportions and their relations to the designs of God, then shall we exclaim, O! Lord, thou alone art good and wise. We judge of the works of men only by examining the whole. Every part ought not to have all perfection, but only that which belongs to it in the order and in the proportion which pervade the whole. In the human body it would not be well that all the organs should be eyes; feet and hands are also necessary. In the universe, we

want the sun for the day, but we also want the moon for the night. It is thus we ought to judge of every part, by its relation to the whole; every other view is narrow and false. But how insignificant are the designs of men, when we compare them with the creation and government of the universe?

Let man, then, admire what he understands, and let him be silent when he cannot comprehend. There is nothing in the universe that does not equally bear these two opposite characters, — the stamp of the Creator, and the marks of nothingness from whence it is drawn, and into which it may at any moment be resolved. It is an incomprehensible mixture of meanness and glory, of the frailty of the material, and of skill in its conformation. The hand of God is displayed everywhere, even in the worm; and weakness and nothingness are discoverable everywhere, even in the most sublime geniuses. All but God himself must be limited and imperfect; it may have more or less of imperfection, but it still must be ever imperfect; we must still be able to point out something in it, of which we may say, This is what should not be, or this it does not possess.

Let us study this visible creation as we will; take the anatomy of the meanest animal; look at the smallest grain of corn that is planted in

the earth, and the manner in which its germ produces and multiplies; observe attentively the rosebud, how carefully it opens to the sun, and closes at his setting; and we shall see more skill and design than in all the works of man. What we call human art, is only a feeble imitation of the great art that we call the laws of nature, and that impiety has not been ashamed to call blind chance.

Can we be astonished that poets have animated all nature; that they have given wings to the winds, and darts to the sun; that they have painted rivers hastening to precipitate themselves into the sea; and trees that reach the clouds, to overcome the rays of the sun by the thickness of their foliage? These figures have been adopted even in common conversation; so natural is it for man to feel the power and skill with which the universe is filled.

Poetry has only attributed to inanimate things the design of the Creator. The language of the poets gave rise to the theology of the pagans; their theologians were poets. They imagined a power, a wisdom in objects the most entirely destitute of intelligence. With them the rivers were Gods, and the fountains were Naiads. The woods and the mountains had their particular divinities; the flowers were subject to Flora, and the fruits to Pomona. The more enlarged

our minds are when we contemplate nature, the more we discover of that inexhaustible wisdom which is the soul of the universe. Then do we see the Infinite Creator represented in all his works, as in a mirror, to the contemplation of his intelligent offspring. But some men have bewildered themselves with their own thoughts; everything with them turns into vanity. Through sophistical arguments they lose sight of that truth, which nature and simplicity would teach them without the aid of philosophy. Others, intoxicated by their passions, live unconscious of the presence of God. To perceive him in his works, we at least ought to be attentive. Passion not only blinds the savage, but those who are surrounded by the light of religion.

It is thus we see men living in the world, thinking only of what gratifies passion and vanity, their souls so laden with the weight of earth, that they cannot raise them to any spiritual object. Whatever is not palpable, cannot be seen, or heard, or touched, or counted, is unreal and chimerical to them. This weakness of the mind at last becomes incredulity, and appears to them strength; and their vanity leads them to applaud themselves for being able to resist arguments that influence the rest of the world. It is as if a monster should boast of not being formed in the fashion of other men; or, as if a blind man were

to triumph at his incredulity about colors that other men perceive.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD.

It is not strange that men do so little for the service of God, and that the little they do costs such an effort; they do not know him; they hardly believe in his existence; the belief which they have in him, is rather a blind deference to the authority of public sentiment, than a living, distinct conviction of Deity. They take it for granted that he is, because they dare not examine for themselves. There is upon this subject a vagueness of thought, an indifference which grows out of the strength of their passions for other objects. They know God only as a something mysterious, unintelligible, and far removed from us; they regard him as a powerful and austere being, who exacts much from us, who opposes our inclinations, who threatens us with great evils, and against whose terrible judgments we ought to be upon our guard. These are the views of people who think seriously upon religion, but even this is a small number. They say of such a person, He is one who fears God. Truly he only fears him; he does not love him;

just as a child fears a master who chastises him, or as a servant who dreads the blows of him whom he serves only from fear. Would you desire the service of a son or that of a menial, which is the service rendered to God?

It is because they do not know God; if they knew him they would love him. God is love; he who does not love him, does not know him; for how can we know love without loving. We must believe, then, that he who only fears God does not know him. In order to understand this subject better, we should set before our minds the truth that God who has made all things, in fact creates us anew every moment. It did not follow necessarily that because we were yesterday, we should exist to-day; we might cease to be, we might relapse into the nothingness from whence we came, if the same all-powerful hand who called us from it did not still sustain us. We are nothing in ourselves; we are only what God has made us to be, and that only while it pleases him. He has only to withdraw the hand which supports us in order to replunge us into the abyss of our nothingness, as a stone which one holds in the air falls from its own weight, as soon as the hand is unclosed which supported it. Thus do we hold existence only as the continual gift of God.

Besides this, there are other blessings far purer

and of a higher order. A good life is better than life itself, virtue is worth more than health; uprightness of heart and the love of God are more above temporal blessings than the heavens are above the earth. If then we are incapable of retaining for a single moment gross and worthless things without the help of God, with how much more reason must it be true that we depend upon Him for the other sublime gifts of his love.

It is not to know thee, O God, to regard thee only as an all-powerful being who gives laws to all nature, and who has created everything which we see, it is only to know a part of thy being, it is not to know that which is most wonderful and most affecting to thy rational offspring. That which transports and melts my soul is to know that thou art the God of my heart. Thou doest there thy good pleasure.

Thou art ever with me. When I do wrong, reproaching me with the evil which I commit, inspiring me with regret for the good which I have forsaken, and with outstretched arms offering me pardon. The good works which I do, they are thy gifts, and they cease to be good works as soon as I regard them as mine, and lose sight of thy bounty which gives them their true value.

I call to my mind all the wonders of nature

that I may form some image of thy glory. I ask for knowledge of thee from thy creatures, and I forget to seek for thee in the depths of my own soul, where thou ever art. We need not descend into the centre of the earth nor go beyond the seas, we need not ascend to heaven to find thee, thou art nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

O God, so glorious and yet so intimately with us, so high above these heavens and yet stooping to the lowliness of thy creatures, so immense and yet dwelling in the bottom of my heart, so awful and yet so worthy of love! When will thy children cease to be ignorant of thee? Oh, for a voice loud enough to reproach the world with its blindness, and to declare with power all that thou art. When we bid men to seek thee in their own hearts, it is as if we were to propose to them to seek for thee in some undiscovered parts of the earth. What is there to a vain and sensual man, more foreign, more remote than the bottom of his own heart? Does he know what it is to enter into himself? Has he ever sought the way? Can he even imagine what is this inward sanctuary, these impenetrable depths of the soul, where thou would be worshipped in spirit and in truth. For me, my Creator, closing my eyes upon outward things which are only vanity and vexation

of spirit, I would enjoy in the recesses of my heart an intimacy with thee through Jesus Christ thy Son.

O God! man does not know thee, he knows not who thou art. "The light shines in the midst of the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not." It is through thee that we live, that we think, that we enjoy the pleasures of life, and we forget Him from whom we receive all these things.

Universal light! it is through thee alone that we see anything. Sun of the soul, who dost shine more brightly than the material sun! seeing nothing except through thee, we see not thee thyself. It is thou who givest all things, to the stars their light, to the fountains their waters and their courses, to the earth its plants, to the fruits their flavor, to all nature its riches and its beauty, to man health, reason, virtue, thou givest all, thou doest all, thou rulest over all; I see only thee, all other things vanish as a shadow before him who has once seen thee. But alas! he who has not seen thee, has seen nothing, he has passed his life in the illusion of a dream; he is as if he were not, more unhappy still, for as we learn from thy word, it were better for him if he had not been born.

For myself I ever find thee within me. It is thou who workest with me in all the good I do.

I have felt a thousand times that I could not of myself conquer my passions, overcome my habits, subdue my pride, follow my reason, or continue to will what I have once willed. It is thou who gavest me this will, who preservest it pure; without thee I am like a reed agitated by the wind. Thou hast given me courage, uprightness, and all the good emotions which I experience. Thou hast created within me a new heart, which desires thy justice and thirsts for thy eternal truth. I leave myself in thy hands; it is enough for me to fulfil thy all-beneficent designs, and in nothing to resist thy good pleasure, for which I was created. Command, forbid, what willest thou that I should do? What that I should not do? Lifted up, cast down, comforted, left to suffer, employed in thy service, or useless to every one, I still adore thee, ever yielding my will, I say with Mary, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

I discover everywhere in the smallest things, that omnipotent hand which supports the heavens and the earth, and which seems as it were in sport while it conducts the universe. All which troubles me is that I cannot comprehend why thou permittest so much evil to mingle with the good. Thou canst not do evil, all that thou doest is good. Whence comes it then that the earth is covered with crimes and with misery?

Evil seems to prevail over good. Thou hast made the world for thy glory, and one is tempted to believe that it has turned to thy dishonor. The number of the wicked infinitely surpasses the number of the good, even within thy church. Nearly all flesh has corrupted its way; the good are good only in part, and give me almost as much pain as the wicked; all suffer, all are in a state of violence, and the misery is equal to the corruption. Why delayest thou, O Lord, to separate the good from the evil? Hasten to glorify thy name; teach them who blaspheme thee how great thou art. But oh, my God, how deep are thy judgments! Thy ways are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth. We are impatient because our whole life is but a moment; but thy long patience rests on thy eternity, before which a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is passed. I would, O God, check all reasonings which tempt me to doubt of thy goodness. I know that thou art always good. I know that thou hast made thy creatures in thine own image upright, just, and good as thou art thyself; but thou hast not willed to deprive them of the power of choosing between good and evil. Thou offerest to them what is good; this is enough; I am sure of it, although I do not comprehend how it is; but the immutable and perfect idea I have of thee

forbids me to doubt of it. Oh, my God, may I ever be one of those little ones to whom thou revealest thy mysteries whilst thou hidest them from the wise and prudent of the world.

Everything which happens to us comes from thee, O God. It is thou who hast done it; and who hast done it for our eternal welfare. In the light of eternity we shall see that what we desired would have been fatal to us, and that what we would have avoided was essential to our well-being; it is thou who doest all things; it is thou who during every moment of our lives art the life of our hearts, the light of our eyes, the intelligence of our minds, the soul of our souls; all that we are, life, action, thought, will, we are through thy power, thy spirit, and thy eternal will.

It is thou who hurriest to the tomb those to whom life is a continual snare, and to whom death, which has put them in safety, was a mercy. It is thou who hast made this death a bitter but salutary remedy to the friends who were bound to them by a too ardent, a too tender love; thus the same stroke which is intended to save the one by death, detaches the other from life, who is thus prepared for death by him who had been the dearest in life to him. Thou dost thus most mercifully, O God, mingle bitterness with all which is not from thyself, that our

hearts formed to love thee, and live in thy love, may be constrained to return to thee, feeling that all other support fails us.

It is, my God, because thou art all love, that thou art a jealous God; a divided heart displeases thee, a wandering heart excites thy pity. Thou art infinite in all things, in love as in wisdom and power; an imperfect love, and a limited wisdom cannot know thee. Can the finite comprehend the Infinite? It is this love which ordains all things, even the evils which we endure; it is through suffering that we are prepared for true happiness.

When shall we return love for love. When shall we turn toward him who is ever seeking us, and whose arms are ever around us? It is while resting on his paternal bosom that we forget him. The sweetness of his gifts makes us forget the giver. Blessings which we daily receive, instead of softening our hearts turn them away from him who gave them. He is the source of all true pleasures. His creatures are only the gross channels through which they flow to us, and the stream has made us forget the Fountain Head. This infinite love follows us everywhere, and we are ever trying to escape from it; it is in all places, and we see it nowhere. We call ourselves alone when we have only God with us. He does all things, and we trust in him

for nothing. We think our hopes are desperate when we have no other resource than his Providence, as if infinite and all-powerful love could not do all things.

ON PIETY.

How unspeakable are the blessings that piety bestows; pure, disinterested piety; piety that never fails, that does good in secret! It enables us to conquer our passions and our bad habits; it destroys our love of the polluting pleasures of the world; it touches our hearts with the salutary truths of religion. It protects us from the fatal snares that are around us. Shall we be ungrateful for so many benefits? Shall we not have the courage to sacrifice to piety all our irregular desires, however it may wound our self-love.

Let us examine ourselves, as in the presence of God, and see if such be our piety, and let us view the subject as it relates to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbor. These three relations will guide us in the following discourse.

I. Are we willing to suffer for God? Does our desire to be with him destroy our fear of death? Do we love to think of God? Do we give ourselves up to him? It is by asking our-

selves these questions, that we shall ascertain the true state of our souls.

1. Are we willing to suffer for God? I do not speak of a certain vague love of suffering, that shows itself in words and fails in actions; of a willingness to suffer, that consists only in a habit of talking magnificently and eloquently of the use of crosses, and that shrinks from the slightest personal inconvenience, and indulges in all the seductive pleasures of a sensual life. Neither do I mean a certain fanciful spirituality, that is ever meditating upon resignation, patience, and the joy of tribulation, while the whole life discovers a jealous self-love, unwilling to suffer anything. True piety is not satisfied with offering to God a sterile faith; it would add the sacrifice of an humble heart, glad to suffer for him.

In vain will you attempt to follow Jesus, if you do not bear his cross. Dare you, can you complain when you have his example to support you? Will not the faithful soul rejoice to suffer in imitation of Jesus, and to show his love for him, with the hope of meriting the blessing that he has promised to those who weep? If I were seriously persuaded that the life of a Christian is a life of patience and self-denial, if in sincerity and truth I loved Jesus Christ, who suffered and humbled himself for me, should I be contented with talking of trials when I am called upon to

bear them, with giving lessons to my neighbor and not applying them to myself? Should I be so impatient with the infirmities of others, so discouraged by obstacles, so disquieted by little troubles, so sensitive about human friendship, so jealous and intractable towards those whom I ought to conciliate, so severe towards the faults of others, so lenient and so backward in mending my own? Should I be so ready to murmur at the trials by which God would prove my virtue?

It is a scandal that might make the pious weep, to see men, who profess to be followers of Christ crucified, shrinking from sufferings and trials; men, who would serve God with all possible convenience, who pretend to sigh after another life, while they are clinging to all the delights of this, who declaim with zeal against self-love, while they take all imaginable precautions to save their own from the least mortification.

2. Are we willing to die to be with Christ? St. Augustin says, that holiness of life and willingness to die are inseparable dispositions. "The love of this life and of another," says he, "cause an incessant conflict in the imperfect soul. Let not such persons say they wish to live, in order to repair the past; if they examine their hearts, they will find that they cling to life, because they

are not sufficiently virtuous to desire the pure joys of heaven." If we only feared the judgments of God upon our entrance into eternity, this fear would be calm and holy. The perfection of our love to God consists in our feeling an entire confidence in him. If we loved him as our father, should we fear him as our judge? Should we fly from his presence, should we tremble thus, when sickness warns us of the approach of death?

But there is a secret infidelity at the bottom of our hearts, that stifles all these sentiments. We weep at the death of those we love, and we tremble at our own, as they who have no hope. Judging from our anxiety about this life, who would believe that we anticipated a happy futurity? How can they to whom religion has opened the path to another life, they whose hope is full of immortality, how can they reconcile such substantial and glorious hopes with the vain enjoyments that fill their hearts in this world? Our piety must be weak and imperfect, if we do not conquer our fear of death. We must take a very confused and superficial view of the eternal resources of the Christian at the hour of death, and of all that he hopes for beyond this transient life, if our hearts do not kindle with joy at the contemplation of the moment when our sorrows shall pass away and our felicity begin

Let us each ask himself, Am I ready to die? Let me not deceive myself by a false courage. Does the ardor of my love for God overcome my fear of death? Do I use this world as not abusing it? Do I regard it as a passing shadow? Am I unwilling to be subjected to its vanities? Is there nothing here that flatters my self-love and enslaves my affections, making me almost forget eternity? In fine, am I every day preparing for death? Is it by this thought that I regulate my life? And when the last hour shall arrive, shall I be prepared for the fatal stroke? Shall I not shrink from its approach? What will become of my courage when I shall feel myself between this world that is fast vanishing from my sight, and eternity that is opening to receive me? Whence is it that those who profess not to be lovers of life do not fear death less than others?

3. Do we enjoy the contemplation of God? Do we feel a sincere joy when we pray to him, and when we meditate upon his presence? Prayer, says St. Augustin, is the measure of love. He who loves much, prays much. He whose heart is closely united to God, has no sweeter consolation than in communion with him. He finds a positive happiness in being able to love him, to speak to him, to meditate upon his attributes, to adore his majesty, to admire his power, to



dwell on his goodness, and to yield himself up to his providence. In this intercourse he pours out, as into the bosom of a tender father, all the sorrows of his overflowing heart; this is his resource under every affliction; he finds strength and consolation in spreading out all his weaknesses and all his desires; and as our whole lives are full of imperfections, as we are never free from sin, we should always, in the exercise of prayer, ask pardon of God for our ingratitude and thank him for his mercy.

Let us pray then, but let us pray with all our duties before us. Do not let us make eloquent and abstract prayers that have no connection with the practice of virtue, but let us pray to become more humble, more docile, more patient, more charitable, more modest, more pure, more disinterested in the performance of our duties. Without this, our prayer will be an illusion to ourselves, and a scandal to our neighbor; an illusion to ourselves, for how often do we see a devotion that only nourishes pride and misleads the imagination; and a scandal to our neighbor, for there can be none greater than to see a person who prays unceasingly without correcting his faults, who comes from his orisons neither less frivolous, nor less discontented and anxious, nor less selfish than he was before.

4. Are we resolved to give ourselves up without reserve to God?



Do we consider his protecting providence our best resource, or have we concerning our own affairs a timid anxiety, that renders us unworthy of his care?

The disposition essential to the soul that consecrates itself to God, is to desire nothing but in reference to his will. Whence comes it that so many good people undertake good works without any success? It is because they commence them without any sincere trust in God, and without a complete renunciation of self. The thought of self is never entirely excluded.

They do not prefer the interest of the work which is God's to their own ill-regulated ill inclinations and perverse fancies, to a weak jealousy of authority and a desire of consideration that contaminates the best things. In fine, it is because they wish to serve God, with a security of benefiting themselves; they are not willing to risk their own glory, and they would be very unhappy if they were exposed to any misapprehension through their love for him. Can we expect from these cowardly and mercenary souls, the magnanimity and the strength that is requisite to promote the designs of Providence? He who distrusts God, is not worthy to be his instrument. God, as St. Paul says, "over all is rich," but it is unto all who call upon him and trust in him.

But we will proceed to the second part of this discourse: What are our dispositions with regard to ourselves?

II. Let us examine ourselves upon these four questions. Whether our zeal be not imprudence under the pretext of religion? Our prudence, is it not earthly-mindedness? Our devotion, is it not the effect of natural temperament? Our charity, is it not an amusement?

1. Is not our zeal imprudence? Let every root of bitterness, said St. Paul, be put away from you. There is a violent zeal that we must correct; it thinks it can change the whole world, it would reform everything, it would subject every one to its laws. The origin of this zeal is disgraceful. The defects of our neighbor interfere with our own; our vanity is wounded by that of another; our own haughtiness finds our neighbor's ridiculous and insupportable; our restlessness is rebuked by the sluggishness and indolence of this person; our gloom is disturbed by the gayety and frivolities of that person, and our heedlessness by the shrewdness and address of another.

If we were faultless, we should not be so much annoyed by the defects of those with whom we associate. If we were to acknowledge honestly that we have not virtue enough to bear patiently with our neighbor's weaknesses, we should show

our own imperfection, and this alarms our vanity. We therefore make our weakness pass for strength, elevate it to a virtue and call it zeal; an imaginary and often hypocritical zeal. For is it not surprising to see how tranquil we are about the errors of others when they do not trouble us, and how soon this wonderful zeal kindles against those who excite our jealousy, or weary our patience?

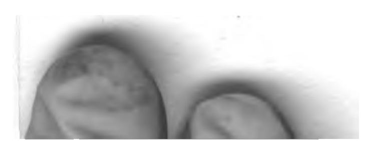
If our zeal be true, it will be regulated by Christianity, it will begin with ourselves; it will be so occupied with our own defects, our own wants, that it will find but little time to think of those of others; and when conscience obliges us to correct our neighbor, we shall be very cautious with regard to ourselves, following the advice of the apostle, "Rebuke thy brother in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Whatever is said or done with passion will not make our neighbor better.

Where do we see any good effects from harsh reproof? We must gain the heart when we would recommend religion; and hearts are won only by love and condescension. It is not enough to be right, it is dishonoring reason to defend it with violence and haughtiness. It is by gentleness, by patience, by love, that we insensibly lead the mind to truth, undermine old prejudices, inspire confidence, and encourage one

to conquer bad habits. When he who receives correction perceives that reproof is given with ill humor, his own is not subdued by it, and his self-love revolts at the mortifying lesson. For "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

2. Our prudence — is it not an earthly policy, a blind prudence which the apostle says, "is death," and is not subject to the law of God? There is an absolute incompatibility between this sort of worldly wisdom and that of the true children of God. How many good works do we see arrested by considerations of mere earthly prudence! How many sacred duties are yielded to the imaginary claims of politeness! Formerly, Christians despised the undeserved contempt of the world; now, they fear its judgments and seek for its favor, they regulate their conduct by its whimsical prejudices, they consult it even on subjects the most holy; not merely that they may avoid scandal, which is right, but they try to accommodate themselves to its vain maxims, and allow their good works to depend upon its decision.

What pains do we take to acquire consideration and confidence, what anxiety, what eagerness for reputation! When we serve God thus, we serve him feebly. Our hearts are divided between him and a thousand objects unworthy



of being remembered before him. We seek the glory of God, we really desire it, but it is upon certain conditions which destroy our best purposes. "We carry," says St. Augustin, "a languid will to the practice of virtue, and thus our minds are flattered, while our hearts are not changed."

Who is there among us who desires perfection as it ought to be desired, more than pleasure, more than reputation? Who is willing to sacrifice to it all that is incompatible with it? Henceforward, let our prudence be regulated by the spirit of God; let it not be an earthly-minded prudence; let us be prudent that we may do good; let us be full of charity towards our neighbor, but of distrust concerning ourselves. Let us be prudent, but let our prudence tend to promote the glory of God, to show the true dignity of religion, and to make us forget ourselves.

3. Our devotion — is it not the effect of temperament? The apostle, predicting the misfortunes with which religion was menaced, said, "men shall be lovers of their own selves." This is what we see every day; men quit the amusements of social life, live in retirement and with strict regularity, but it is because their temperament is harsh, and they prefer solitude. Others are modest and gentle, but this is the effect

of weakness and indolence rather than virtue. There is but one gospel, yet each one adapts it to his own peculiar inclinations. We are commanded to do violence to our inclinations, instead of which we see people forcing religion to their own interests. I know that the grace of God takes various forms in different minds; but, after all, the essentials of religion are the same, and although there are many ways of going to God, they all meet at one point, they all bind us to the obedience of the same law, and hold us in an entire union of sentiment and practice.

Yet where do we see this admirable conformity? Everywhere we see men who disfigure religion by vain attempts to make it accord with their own caprices. One is fervent in prayer, but he is insensible to the miseries and weaknesses of his neighbor. Another talks much of the love of God, and of self-sacrifice, whilst he is not willing to suffer the least contradiction. Another deprives himself of allowed pleasures, that he may indulge himself in those that are forbidden.

This woman is fervent and scrupulous in works of supererogation, but faithless in the most common and positive duties; she fasts and prays, but she does not restrain her pride or the violence of her temper. Thus we see peo-

ple who think, because they do what they are not commanded to do, that they may dispense with what is required.

Far better is that simple obedience that finds the rule of life in the gospel, and follows it, without any of those extravagances that disturb its calm and celestial features. Place each virtue in its proper rank. Practise, according to the measure of your gifts, the most difficult virtues; but do not practise them at the expense of others. Charity and justice are the first of the virtues; why cherish one at the expense of the other? Be strict, even austere, if you will; but be humble. Be very zealous for the reformation of abuses; but be gentle, charitable, and compassionate. Do, for the glory of God, all that your love for him prompts, but begin with the performance of all the duties of the situation in which you are placed. Without this your virtues are only whims and fancies, and instead of glorifying God, you are a subject for the scandal of the world.

4. Our charity — is it not an amusement? Our friendships — are they not vain and ill-regulated? Is not St. Chrysostom right in saying, that we are more faithless to God in our friendships than even in our enmities? For, says he, there is a terrible law against him who hates his neighbor, and when we discover in ourselves the

feelings of hatred and vengeance, we are shocked and make haste to be reconciled to our brother. But it is not so with our friendships. It seems so innocent, so natural, so conformable to charity, to love our brethren, that religion seems to authorize it, and thus we are not enough on our guard in forming our friendships, and they are often the result of whim or a blind prejudice.

Let us give everything its proper place in our hearts. Are our friendships regulated by religion? Do we love more than others, those friends, whom we can carry in our thoughts to God, and who can themselves lead us to him? Do we seek such with a real pleasure? Alas, how frivolous are our friendships! What loss of time in expressing feelings that often do not exist! How many useless or dangerous confessions! How many unjust preferences destroying the confiding affection and harmony of families!

I know that we are permitted to love those with more tenderness who possess distinguished excellence, and those who are bound to us by the ties of nature and sympathy; but we must be sober and moderate even in these friendships; let them dwell in the very bottom of our hearts, but there let them be controlled by a calm discretion, and be ever kept in subjection by the general law of charity. Let them be outwardly expressed only so far as is necessary to show

esteem, and the cordiality and gratitude that we ought to manifest. We never should allow those movements of tenderness to escape us, or indulge in those familiar caresses and expressions of partiality, which may wound others. The most holy friendships should be restrained within these bounds.

III. In the regulation of our conduct towards our neighbor, we are called upon to be gentle and humble, to act and to suffer.

1. To be gentle and humble. The foundation of peace with all men is humility. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. It is essential to men in their mutual intercourse to cultivate humility; pride is incompatible with pride; hence arise divisions in the world.

Humility is still more necessary where we would promote the designs of God, which are to be supported only by the same spirit which the Son of God has himself chosen for the execution of his great work, the establishment of religion. We must be ready to perform the most menial offices; we should not desire any distinction; we should be sincerely contented with obscurity, and be willing to be forgotten by the world. We should esteem such a situation as a happy asylum. We should renounce in our hearts all desire of reputation for understanding, or for virtue, which might awaken a secret self-compla-



cency, and be a low and unworthy recompense for any sacrifices we may have made to the will of God. We should be able to say from our retreat what the Prophet King said in the midst of his triumph, "I will humble myself yet more in my own eyes, that I may please thee, O my God!"

We must stifle all rising jealousies, all little contrivances to promote our own glory, vain desires to please, or to succeed, or to be praised, the fear of seeing others preferred to ourselves, the anxiety to have our plans carried into effect, the natural love of dominion, and desire to influence others. These rules are soon given, but it is not so easy to observe them. Our natures must be subdued by the grace of God in our hearts, before we can at all times act with such simplicity and humility. With some people not only pride and hauteur render these duties very difficult, but great natural sensitiveness makes the practice of them nearly impossible, and instead of respecting their neighbor with a true feeling of humility, all their charity amounts only to a sort of compassionate toleration that nearly resembles contempt.

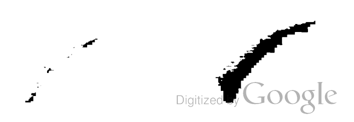
2. We must act. During the short and precious time that is allowed us on earth, let us hasten to employ ourselves. While it remains to us, let us not fail to consecrate it to good

works. For when everything else shall have vanished forever, the works of the just will follow them, even beyond this life; for it is certain, according to the beautiful language of St. Paul, "we have been created in Jesus Christ unto good works, that we should walk in them;" that is to say, pass our whole lives in this happy employment.

Let us then do good, according to the means which God has given us, with discretion, with courage, and with perseverance. With discretion; because, while charity extends its efforts for the glory of God, it also regulates its exertions by the nature of the work, and by the condition of him who undertakes it; it avoids disproportionate designs. With courage; for St. Paul exhorts us not to become weary in well doing. With perseverance; for we often see weak and yielding spirits, who very soon begin to turn back in their course.

We shall find occasions to do good everywhere; they surround us; it is the will that is needed. The deepest solitudes, when we seem to have the least communication with others, will furnish us with means of doing good to our fellow-beings, and of glorifying Him who is their master and ours.

Finally, we must suffer; and I shall finish this discourse with one of the most important truths



with which I commenced it. Yes, we must suffer not only in submission to the will of Providence, for the purification of our souls, and the perfection of our virtues, but often for the success of those designs of which God has made us the instruments. Whoever desires to do good must be willing and must expect to suffer. You must arm yourselves with courage and patience. You must be willing to endure tribulations and trials of all sorts, which would overwhelm you if you were not supported by well-established faith and charity.

The world will blame, will tempt you; your friends and your enemies may appear to combine against your good designs. Those even with whom you are united to promote a good work may be a snare to you. Opposite humors and temperaments, different views, contrary habits, may cause you great suffering from those upon whom you have depended for support and consolation. Their defects and yours will perpetually clash in your intercourse with them. If true charity does not soften these difficulties, if a more than common virtue does not sustain you under these bitter trials, if an unfailing and fervent piety does not render this yoke easy to you, you will sink under it.

ON PRAYER.

Of all the duties enjoined by Christianity none is more essential, and yet more neglected, than prayer. Most people consider this exercise a fatiguing ceremony, which they are justified in abridging as much as possible. Even those, whose profession or fears lead them to pray, pray with such languor and wandering of mind, that their prayers, far from drawing down blessings, only increase their condemnation. I wish to demonstrate, in this discourse, first, the general necessity of prayer; secondly, the peculiar duty of prayer; thirdly, the manner in which we ought to pray.

First. *God alone can instruct us in our duty.* The teachings of men, however wise and well disposed they may be, are still ineffectual, if God do not shed on the soul that light which opens the mind to truth. The imperfections of our fellow-creatures cast a shade over the truths that we learn from them. Such is our weakness, that we do not receive, with sufficient docility, the instructions of those who are as imperfect as ourselves. A thousand suspicions, jealousies, fears, and prejudices prevent us from profiting, as we might, by what we hear from men; and though they announce the most serious truths,



yet what they do weakens the effect of what they say. In a word, it is God alone who can perfectly teach us.

St. Bernard said, in writing to a pious friend, — If you are seeking less to satisfy a vain curiosity than to get true wisdom, you will sooner find it in deserts than in books. The silence of the rocks and the pathless forests will teach you better than the eloquence of the most gifted men. "All," says St. Augustin, "that we possess of truth and wisdom, is a borrowed good, flowing from that fountain, for which we ought to thirst in the fearful desert of this world, that, being refreshed and invigorated by these dews from heaven, we may not faint upon the road that conducts us to a better country. Every attempt to satisfy the cravings of our hearts at other sources, only increases the void. You will be always poor, if you do not possess the only true riches." All light that does not proceed from God, is false; it only dazzles us; it sheds no illumination upon the difficult paths in which we must walk, along the precipices that are about us.

Our experience and our reflections cannot, on all occasions, give us just and certain rules of conduct. The advice of our wisest and most sincere friends is not always sufficient; many things escape their observation, and many that

do not are too painful to be spoken. They suppress much from delicacy, or sometimes from a fear of transgressing the bounds that our friendship and confidence in them will allow. The animadversions of our enemies, however severe or vigilant they may be, fail to enlighten us with regard to ourselves. Their malignity furnishes our self-love with a pretext for the indulgence of the greatest faults. The blindness of our self-love is so great, that we find reasons for being satisfied with ourselves while all the world condemn us. What must we learn from all this darkness? That it is God alone who can dissipate it; that it is he alone whom we can never doubt; that he alone is true, and knoweth all things; that if we go to him in sincerity, he will teach us what men dare not tell us, what books cannot, all that is essential for us to know.

Be assured that the greatest obstacle to true wisdom is the presumption inspired by that which is false. The first step towards this precious knowledge is earnestly to desire it, to feel the want of it, and to be convinced that they who seek it must address themselves to the Father of lights, who freely gives to him who asks in faith. But if it be true that God alone can enlighten us, it is not the less true that he will do this only in answer to our prayers. Are we not too happy in being able to obtain so

great a blessing by only asking for it? No part of the effort that we make to acquire the transient enjoyments of this life, is necessary to obtain these heavenly blessings. What will we not do, what are we not willing to suffer, to possess dangerous and contemptible things, and often without any success. It is not thus with heavenly things. God is always ready to grant them to those who make the request in sincerity and truth. The Christian life is a long and continual tendency of our hearts towards that eternal goodness which we desire on earth. All our happiness consists in thirsting for it. Now this thirst is prayer. Ever desire to approach your Creator, and you will never cease to pray.

Do not think that it is necessary to pronounce many words. To pray is to say, Let thy will be done; it is to form a good purpose; it is to raise your heart to God; it is to lament your weakness; it is to sigh at the recollection of your frequent disobedience. This prayer demands neither method, nor science, nor reasoning; it is not necessary to quit one's employment; it is a simple movement of the heart towards its Creator, and a desire, that whatever you are doing, you may do it to his glory. The best of all prayers is to act with a pure intention and with a continual reference to the will of God. It depends upon ourselves whether our

prayers be efficacious. It is not by a miracle, but by a change of heart, that we are benefited, by a spirit of submission. Let us believe, let us trust, let us hope, and God never will reject our prayer. Yet how many Christians do we see, strangers to the privilege, aliens from God, who seldom think of him, who never open their hearts to him; who seek elsewhere the counsels of a false wisdom, and vain and dangerous consolations; who cannot resolve to seek, in humble, fervent prayer to God, a remedy for their griefs, and a true knowledge of their defects, the necessary power to conquer their vicious and perverse inclinations, and the consolations and assistance they require, that they may not be discouraged in a virtuous life.

But some will say, I have no interest in prayer; it wearies me; my imagination is excited by sensible and more agreeable objects, and wanders in spite of me.

If neither your reverence for the great truths of religion, nor the majesty of the ever-present Deity, nor the interest of your eternal salvation, have power to arrest your mind, and engage it in prayer; at least mourn with me for your infidelity; be ashamed of your weakness, and wish that your thoughts were more under your control, and desire to become less frivolous and inconstant. Make an effort to subject your mind to



this discipline. You will gradually acquire a habit and facility. What is now tedious will become delightful; and you will then feel, with a peace that the world cannot give nor take away, that God is good. Make a courageous effort to overcome yourself. There can be no occasion that calls for it more imperiously.

Secondly. *The peculiar obligation of prayer.* Were I to give all the proofs that the subject affords, I should describe every condition of life, that I might point out its dangers, and the necessity of recourse to God in prayer. But I will simply state, that under all circumstances we have need of prayer. There is no situation in which we can be placed, where we have not many virtues to acquire, and many faults to correct. We find in our temperament, or in our habits, or in the peculiar character of our minds, qualities that do not suit our occupations, and that oppose our duties. One person is connected by marriage with another, whose temper is so unequal, that life becomes a perpetual warfare. Some, who are exposed to the contagious atmosphere of the world, find themselves so susceptible of the vanity which they inhale, that all their pure desires vanish. Others have solemnly promised to renounce their resentments, to conquer their aversions, to suffer with patience certain crosses, and to repress their eagerness for

wealth; but nature prevails, and they are vindictive, violent, impatient, and avaricious.

Whence comes it, that these resolutions are so frail? That all these people desire to improve, that they wish to perform their duty towards God and man better, and yet fail; it is that our own strength and wisdom alone are not enough. We undertake to do everything without God; therefore we do not succeed. It is at the foot of the altar, that we must seek for counsel which will aid us. It is with God, that we must lay our plan of virtue and usefulness; it is he alone that can render them successful. Without him, all our designs, however good they may appear, are only temerity and delusion. Let us then pray, that we may learn what we are, and what we ought to be. By this means, we shall not only learn the number and the bad effects of our peculiar faults, but we shall also learn to what virtues we are called, and the way to practise them. The rays of that pure and heavenly light that visits the humble soul, will beam on us; and we shall feel and understand that everything is possible to those who put their whole trust in God. Thus, not only to those who live in retirement, but to those who are exposed to the agitations of the world and the excitements of business, it is peculiarly necessary, by contemplation and fervent prayer, to

restore their souls to that serenity, which the dissipations of life, and commerce with men, have disturbed. To those who are engaged in business, contemplation and prayer are much more difficult than to those who live in retirement; but it is far more necessary for them to have frequent recourse to God in fervent prayer. In the most holy occupation a certain degree of precaution is necessary.

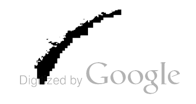
Do not devote all your time to action, but reserve a certain portion of it for meditation upon eternity. We see Jesus Christ inviting his disciples to go apart, in a desert place, and rest awhile, after their return from the cities, where they had been to announce his religion. How much more necessary is it for us to approach the source of all virtue, that we may revive our failing faith and charity, when we return from the busy scenes of life, where men speak and act as if they had never known that there is a God. We should look upon prayer as the remedy for our weaknesses, the rectifier of our faults. He who was without sin, prayed constantly; how much more ought we, who are sinners, to be faithful in prayer!

Even the exercise of charity is often a snare to us; it calls us to certain occupations that dissipate the mind, and that may degenerate into mere amusement. It is for this reason that St.

Chrysostom says, that nothing is so important as to keep an exact proportion between the interior source of virtue and the external practice of it; else, like the foolish virgins, we shall find that the oil in our lamps is exhausted when the bridegroom comes.

The necessity we feel that God should bless our labors, is another powerful motive to prayer. It often happens, that all human help is vain. It is God alone that can aid us, and it does not require much faith to believe, that it is less our exertions, our foresight, and our industry, than the blessing of the Almighty, that can give success to our wishes.

Thirdly. *Of the manner in which we ought to pray.* We must pray with attention. God listens to the voice of the heart, not to that of the lips. Our whole heart must be engaged in prayer. It must fasten upon what it prays for; and every human object must disappear from our minds. To whom must we speak with attention, if not to God? Can he demand less of us, than that we should think of what we say to him? Dare we hope that he will listen to us, and think of us, when we forget ourselves in the midst of our prayers? This attention to prayer, which it is so just to exact from Christians, may be practised with less difficulty than we imagine. It is true, that the most faithful souls suffer from



occasional, involuntary distractions. They cannot always control their imaginations, and in the silence of their spirits, enter into the presence of God. But these unbidden wanderings of the mind ought not to trouble us; and they may conduct to our perfection even more than the most sublime and affecting prayers, if we earnestly strive to overcome them, and submit with humility to this experience of our infirmity. But to dwell willingly on frivolous and worldly things, during prayer, to make no effort to check the vain thoughts that intrude upon this sacred employment and come between us and the Father of our spirits, — is not this choosing to live the sport of our senses, and separated from God?

We must also ask with faith; a faith so firm that it never hesitates. He who prays without confidence, cannot hope that his prayer will be granted. Will not God love the heart that trusts in him? Will he reject those who bring all their treasures to him, and repose everything upon his goodness? When we pray to God, says St. Cyprian, with entire assurance, it is himself who has given us the spirit of our prayer. Then it is the Father listening to the words of his child; it is he who dwells in the depth of our hearts, teaching us to pray. But must we not confess, that this filial confidence is wanting in all our

prayers? Is not prayer our resource only after all others have failed us? If we look into our hearts, shall we not find, that we ask of God as if we had never before received benefits from him? Shall we not discover there a secret infidelity, that renders us unworthy of his goodness: Let us tremble, lest, when Jesus Christ shall judge us, he pronounces the same reproach that he did to Peter: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

We must join humility with trust. Great God, said Daniel, when we prostrate ourselves at thy feet, we do not place our hopes, for the success of our prayers, upon our righteousness, but upon thy mercy. Without this disposition in our hearts, all others, however pious they may be, cannot please God. St. Augustin observes, that the failure of Peter should not be attributed to insincerity in his zeal for Jesus Christ. He loved his master in good faith; in good faith he would rather have died than have forsaken him; but his fault lay in trusting to his own strength to do what his own heart dictated.

It is not enough to possess a right spirit, an exact knowledge of duty, a sincere desire to perform it. We must continually renew this desire, and enkindle this flame within us, at the fountain of pure and eternal light.

It is the humble and contrite heart that God

will not despise. Remark the difference which the Evangelist has pointed out between the prayer of the proud and presumptuous Pharisee and the humble and penitent Publican. The one relates his virtues, the other deplores his sins; the good works of the one shall be set aside, while the penitence of the other shall be accepted. It will be thus with many Christians. Sinners, vile in their own eyes, will be objects of the mercy of God; while some, who have made professions of piety, will be condemned on account of the pride and arrogance that have contaminated their good works. It will be so, because these have said in their hearts, Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are. They imagine themselves privileged souls; they pretend that they alone have penetrated the mysteries of the kingdom of God; they have a language and science of their own; they believe that their zeal can accomplish everything. Their regular lives favor their vanity; but in truth they are incapable of self-sacrifice, and they go to their devotions, with their hearts full of pride and presumption. Unhappy are those who pray in this manner. Unhappy are they whose prayers do not render them more humble, more submissive, more vigilant over their faults, and more willing to live in obscurity.

We must pray with love. It is love, says St.

Augustin, that asks, that seeks, that knocks, that finds, and that is faithful to what it finds. We cease to pray to God, as soon as we cease to love him, as soon as we cease to thirst for his perfections. The coldness of our love is the silence of our hearts towards God. Without this, we may pronounce prayers, but we do not pray; for what shall lead us to meditate upon the laws of God, if it be not the love of him who has made these laws. Let our hearts be full of love then, and they will pray. Happy are they who think seriously of the truths of religion, but far more happy are they who feel and love them. We must ardently desire, that God will grant us spiritual blessings; and the ardor of our wishes must render us worthy of the blessings. For if we pray only from custom, from fear, in the time of tribulation; if we honor God only with our lips, whilst our hearts are far from him; if we do not feel a strong desire for the success of our prayers; if we feel a chilling indifference, in approaching him who is a consuming fire; if we have no zeal for his glory; if we do not feel hatred for sin, and a thirst for perfection; we cannot hope for a blessing upon such heartless prayers.

We must pray with perseverance. The perfect heart is never weary of seeking God. Ought we to complain, if God sometimes leaves us to

obscurity, and doubt, and temptation? Trials purify humble souls, and they serve to expiate the faults of the unfaithful; they confound those who, even in their prayers, have flattered their cowardice and pride. If an innocent soul, devoted to God, suffer from any secret disturbance it should be humble, adore the designs of God, and redouble its prayers and its fervor. How often do we hear those, who every day have to reproach themselves with unfaithfulness towards God, complain that he refuses to answer their prayers! Ought they not to acknowledge, that it is their sins which have formed a thick cloud between heaven and them, and that God has justly hidden himself from them? How often has he recalled us from our wanderings! How often, ungrateful as we are, have we been deaf to his voice, and insensible to his goodness! He would make us feel, that we are blind and miserable when we forsake him; he would teach us by privation, the value of the blessings that we have slighted; and shall we not bear our punishment with patience? Who can boast of having done all that he ought to have done, of having repaired all his past errors, of having purified his heart, so that he may claim as a right that God should listen to his prayer? Alas! all our pride, great as it is, would not be sufficient to inspire such presumption. If, then, the

Almighty do not grant our petitions, let us adore his justice, let us be silent, let us humble ourselves, and let us pray without ceasing. This humble perseverance will obtain from him what we should never obtain by our own merit. It will make us pass happily from darkness to light; for know, says St. Augustin, that God is near to us even when he appears far from us.

Lastly. We should pray with a pure intention. We should not mingle, in our prayers, what is false with what is real, what is perishable with what is eternal, low and temporal interests with that which concerns our salvation. Do not seek to render God the protector of your self-love and ambition, but the promoter of your good desires. You ask for the gratification of your passions, or to be delivered from the cross, of which he knows you have need; carry not to the foot of the altar irregular desires and indiscreet prayers; sigh not there for vain and fleeting pleasures. Open your heart to your Father in heaven, that his spirit may enable you to ask for the true riches. How can he grant you, says St. Augustin, what you do not yourself desire to receive? You pray every day that his will may be done, and that his kingdom may come. How can you utter this prayer with sincerity, when you prefer your own will to his, and make his law yield to the vain pretexts with which

your self-love seeks to elude it? Can you make this prayer, you who disturb his reign in your heart by so many impure and vain desires, you, in fine, who fear the arrival of his reign, and do not desire that God should grant what you seem to pray for? No. If he at this moment were to offer to give you a new heart, and render you humble, and meek, and self-denying, and willing to bear the cross, your pride would revolt, and you would not accept the offer, or you would make a reservation in favor of your ruling passion, and try to accommodate your piety to your humor and fancies.

Methods and forms of prayer, received from pious and experienced Christians, should be treated with respect; but we must not neglect the essential of prayer, which is an earnest desire that God, who knows our wants better than we do ourselves, will supply them. His Holy Spirit will teach us to pray, and will guide us when we are in need of its aid. But what is most important is the persuasion, that the simplest, most humble mode of prayer is the best, and the most acceptable, and the most conformable to the words of the Son of God and the apostles. In such prayers we find light and strength to fulfil our duty with meekness and humility, in whatever condition we may be placed. Without this help we shall form good

resolutions in vain; deprived of this interior support, we shall be without strength in all the difficulties and temptations of life.

ADVICE UPON THE EXERCISES OF PRAYER AND PIETY.

PERFECT prayer must be the love of God. The excellence of this prayer does not consist in the number of words that we pronounce, for God sees our hearts, and knows all that we want. The heart asks only what God wills that we should have. He who does not desire with his whole heart, makes a deceitful prayer. How few are there who pray! for how few really wish the true riches, humility, renunciation of their own will, the reign of God upon the ruins of their self-love. We must desire these blessings sincerely, and in connection with all the details of life; else prayer is only an illusion, like a pleasant dream to a wretched sufferer, who thinks he possesses a felicity that is far from him. Still we must not cease to pray even when we cannot feel this true love and sincere desire; God looks into the soul, and will see the desire to love him.

When we are engaged even in the works of God, we may feel an inevitable distraction of mind; but we carry within us a flame which is not extinguished, but, on the contrary, nourishes a secret prayer, that is like a lamp, ever burning before the throne of the Supreme.

When the divine light begins to illuminate us, then we have a clear vision of truth, and we immediately recognize it. We need not reason to prove the splendor of the sun; it rises, and we see it. This union with God in prayer must be the result of faithful obedience to his will; by this alone must we measure our love to him; our meditations ought to become every day more profound and intimate; divine truths should enter the substance of our soul, and nourish and grow with it. We ought to meditate upon truth, and meditate at leisure, in singleness of heart, without seeking ingenious and abstract thoughts.

Let us do good, according to the means that God has given us, with discernment, with courage, and with perseverance. With discernment; for charity, while it seeks to promote the glory of God by imparting to man, has reference to the nature, the work, and the condition of him who undertakes it; it avoids disproportionate designs. With courage; St. Paul exhorts us not to be weary in well doing; that is, let us

not be wanting in true zeal and faith. With perseverance; for we see weak spirits, light and inconstant minds, soon looking back in the career of virtue. We shall always find occasions to do good; they present themselves everywhere; it is the will to do good that is wanting. Even solitude, where we seem to have no means of action, even the solitude that allows the least action, and affords the least communication with our fellow-beings, still presents opportunities of glorifying him who is their Master and ours.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD TEACHES WITHIN.

It is certain, that the Scriptures declare that "the Spirit of God dwells within us," that it animates us, speaks to us in silence, suggests all truth to us, and that we are so united to it, that we are joined unto the Lord in one spirit. This is what the Christian religion teaches us. Those learned men, who have been most opposed to the idea of an interior life, are obliged to acknowledge it. Notwithstanding this, they suppose that the external law, or rather the light from certain doctrines and reasonings, enlightens our minds, and that afterwards it is our reason that acts by itself from these instructions. They

do not attach sufficient importance to the teacher within us, which is the Spirit of God. This is the soul of our soul, and without it we could form no thought or desire. Alas! then, of what blindness we are guilty, if we suppose that we are alone in this interior sanctuary, while, on the contrary, God is there even more intimately than we are ourselves.

You, will say, perhaps, Are we then inspired? Yes, doubtless, but not as the prophets and the apostles were. Without the actual inspiration of the Almighty, we could neither do, nor will, nor think anything. We are then always inspired; but we are ever stifling this inspiration. God never ceases to speak to us; but the noise of the world without, and the tumult of our passions within, bewilder us, and prevent us from listening to him. All must be silent around us, and all must be still within us, when we should listen with our whole souls to this voice. It is a still, small voice, and is only heard by those who listen to no other. Alas! how seldom is it that the soul is so still, that it can hear when God speaks to it. Our vain desires and our self-love confuse the voice within us. We know that it speaks to us, that it demands something of us; but we cannot hear what it says, and we are often glad that it is unintelligible. Ought we to wonder that so many, even religious

persons, who are engrossed with amusements, full of vain desires, false wisdom, and self-confidence, cannot understand it, and regard this interior word of God as a chimera?

This inspiration must not make us think that we are like prophets. The inspiration of the prophets was full of certainty upon those things that God commanded them to declare or to do; they were called upon to reveal what related to the future, or to perform a miracle, or to act with the divine authority. This inspiration, on the contrary, is without light and without certainty; it limits itself to teaching us obedience, patience, meekness, humility, and all other Christian virtues. It is not a divine monition to predict, to change the laws of nature, or to command men with an authority from God. It is a simple invitation from the depths of the soul, to obey, and to resign ourselves even to death, if it be the will of God. This inspiration, regarded thus, and within these bounds, and in its true simplicity, contains only the common doctrine of the Christian church. It has not in itself, if the imaginations of men add nothing to it, any temptation to presumption or illusion; on the contrary, it places us in the hands of God, trusting all to his Spirit, without either violating our liberty, or leaving anything to our pride and fancies.

If this truth be admitted, that God always speaks within us, he speaks to impenitent sinners; but they are deafened and stunned by the tumult of their passions, and cannot hear his voice; his word to them is a fable. He speaks in the souls of sinners who are converted; these feel the remorse of conscience, and this remorse is the voice of God within them, reproaching them for their vices. When sinners are truly touched, they find no difficulty in comprehending this secret voice; for it is that which penetrates their souls; it is in them the two-edged sword of which St. Paul speaks. God makes himself felt, understood, and followed. They hear this voice of mercy, entering the very recesses of the heart, in accents of tender reproach, and the soul is torn with agony. This is true contrition.

God speaks in the hearts of the wise and learned, of them whose regular lives appear adorned with many virtues; but such persons are often too full of their own wisdom; they listen too much to themselves to listen much to God. They turn everything to reasoning; they form principles from natural wisdom and by worldly prudence, that they would have arrived at much sooner by singleness of heart and a docility to the will of God. They often appear much better than they are; theirs is a mixed

excellence; they are too wise and great in their own eyes; and I have often remarked, that an ignorant sinner who is beginning in his conversion to be touched with the true love of God, is more disposed to understand this interior word of the Spirit, than certain enlightened and wise people who have grown old in their own wisdom. God, who seeks to communicate himself, cannot be received by these souls, so full of themselves and their own virtue and wisdom; but his presence is with the simple. Where are these simple souls? I see but few of them. God sees them, and it is with them that he is pleased to dwell. My Father and I, says Jesus Christ, will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

UPON THE USE OF CROSSES.

We find it difficult to believe in that almighty goodness that inflicts trials on those whom it loves. Why, we say, should it please God to make us suffer? Why could he not make us good without making us miserable? Doubtless he could, for he is all-powerful; the hearts of men are in his hands, and he can turn them as he will. But he, who could save us from sor-



row, has not chosen to do it; just as he has willed that men should slowly grow from infancy to manhood, instead of creating them at once in maturity. We have only to be silent, and adore his profound wisdom without comprehending it. Thus we see clearly, that we cannot be virtuous but in proportion as we become humble, disinterested, trusting everything to God, without any unquiet concern about ourselves. We have need of all our crosses. When we suffer much, it is because we have strong ties that it is necessary to loosen. We resist, and we thus retard the divine operation; we repulse the heavenly hand, and it must come again: it would be wiser to yield ourselves at once to God. That the operation of his providence, which overthrows our self-love, should not be painful to us, would require the intervention of a miracle. Would it be less miraculous, that a soul, absorbed in its own concerns, should, in a moment, become dead to self, than that a child should go to sleep a child, and wake up a man? The work of God in the heart, as upon the body, is invisible; it is by a train of almost insensible events. He not only produces these effects gradually, but by ways that seem so simple, and so calculated to succeed, that human wisdom attributes the success to these natural causes, and thus the finger of God

is overlooked. Formerly every work of God was by a miracle, and this precluded that exercise of faith which he now demands of us. It is to try our faith, that God renders this operation so slow and sorrowful.

The ingratitude and inconstancy of our fellow-creatures, the misapprehensions and disgust we meet with in prosperity, detach us from life and its deceitful enjoyments. God destroys the delusions of self-love by the experience which he gives us of our sinfulness and numberless errors. All this appears natural to us; and thus our self-love is consumed by a slow fire, while he would have it annihilated at once, in the overpowering flame of a pure and devoted love to God; but this would cost us but little pain. It is an excess of self-love that would become perfect in a moment, rather than by slow degrees. What is it that makes us complain of the length of our trials? It is still this attachment to self; and this is what God would destroy. Why should we complain? The love of the beings and things of this world is our evil, and still more the love of ourselves. Our Father in heaven orders a series of events that gradually detach us from the earth, and finally from self. This operation is painful; but it is the disease of our soul that renders it necessary, and that causes the pain we feel. Is it cruelty in the

surgeon to cut to the quick? No; on the contrary, it is affection, it is skill; he would so treat his only son.

And thus it is with God; his parental heart does not wish to grieve us; he must wound us to the very heart, that he may cure its malady. He must take from us what is most dear, lest we love it too much, lest we love it to the prejudice of our love for him. We weep, we despair, we groan in our spirits, and we murmur against God; but he leaves us to our sorrow, and we are saved; our present grief saves us from an eternal sorrow. He has placed the friends whom he has taken from us in safety, to restore them to us in eternity. He has deprived us of them, that he may teach us to love them with a pure love, a love that we may enjoy in his presence forever; he confers a greater blessing than we were capable of desiring.

There happens nothing, even to the sinner, that God has not willed. It is he who does all, who rules, who gives to all whatever they receive. He has numbered the very hairs of our head, the leaves of the trees, the sands on the sea-shore, and the drops of the ocean. In creating the universe, his wisdom has weighed and measured the least atom. It is he who, every moment, produces and renews the breath of life within us. It is he who has numbered our days.

That which most astonishes us, is nothing in the sight of God. Of what consequence is it whether this frail house of clay crumble into dust a little sooner, or a little later? What do they lose, who are deprived of those whom they love? Perhaps they lose only a perpetual delirium; they lose their forgetfulness of God and of themselves, in which they were plunged; or rather they gain, by the efficacy of this trial, the felicity of detachment from the world; the same stroke that saves the person who dies, prepares others, by suffering, to labor for their own salvation. Is it not then true, that God is good, that he is tender and compassionate towards our real sorrows, even when he strikes us to the heart, and we are tempted to complain of his severity?

Very soon they who are separated will be reunited, and there will appear no trace of the separation. They, who are about to set out upon a journey, ought not to feel themselves far distant from those who have gone to the same country, a few days before. Life is like a torrent; the past is but a dream; the present, while we are thinking of it, escapes us, and is precipitated in the same abyss that has swallowed up the past; the future will not be of a different nature, it will pass as rapidly. A few moments, and a few more, and all wil. be

ended; what has appeared long and tedious, will seem short when it is finished.

It is this unquiet self-love that renders us so sensitive. The sick man, who sleeps ill, thinks the night long. We exaggerate, from cowardice, all the evils which we encounter: they are great, but our sensibility increases them. The true way to bear them is to yield ourselves up with confidence to God. We suffer, indeed, but God wills this suffering, that it may purify us, and render us worthy of him. The world forgets us, slights us, is ungrateful to us, places us in the rank of those who have passed away; true, and it is astonishing that the world should be unjust, treacherous, and deceitful? It is nevertheless the same world that you have not been ashamed to love so dearly, and that perhaps you still love; and this is the source of your sorrow.

Almighty God! thou, who alone canst see the whole extent of our misery, canst alone cure it. Give us, we implore thee, the faith, the hope, the love, the Christian courage that we need. Enable us ever to raise our eyes to thee, the all-powerful, who will give to thy children only what is for their everlasting good, and to Jesus Christ thy Son, who is our example in suffering. Raise our hearts, O, our Father; make them like his, that they may be self-denying, and

may fear only thy displeasure and eternal sorrow. O Lord, thou seest the weakness and desolation of the creature of thy hands. It has no resource in itself; it wants everything, and seeks in thee with confidence the good it cannot find elsewhere.

UPON DAILY FAULTS.

There are many faults that are voluntary to a certain degree, though they are not committed with a deliberate purpose of disobedience to God. We often reproach a friend for a fault that he knows gives us pain, and that he still repeats with this knowledge, although not with the design to offend us. We sometimes commit such faults towards God. They are in truth voluntary, because, though we do not reflect at the moment, yet we have an interior light in our consciences, that should be sufficient at least to make us hesitate before we act. These are often the faults of very good people. Small offences become great in our eyes, as the light from God increases within us, just as the sun, when rising, reveals to us the magnitude of objects, of which we had only a confused idea in

the night. As this light rises within us we must expect that the imperfections, which we now discover, will appear greater and more sinful, and that we shall see, springing up from our hearts, numerous defects that we never suspected were there. We shall there find weakness enough to destroy our self-love, and to demolish to the very foundation the fabric of human pride. Nothing proves more certainly the real advancement of the soul, than the power to see these imperfections without being discouraged by them. When we perceive an inclination to do wrong before we have committed a fault, we must abstain from it; but after we have committed it, we must courageously endure the humiliation that follows. When we perceive the fault before we commit it, we must beware of resisting the Spirit of God, that is warning us of danger, and that may, if we neglect it, be silenced within us, and that will in time leave us, if we do not yield to it. The faults of precipitation or of frailty, are nothing in comparison with those which render us deaf to this voice of the Holy Spirit, that is beginning to speak in the bottom of our hearts.

Those faults that we do not perceive till after they are committed, will not be cured by inquietude and vexation with ourselves; on the contrary, this fretfulness is only the impatience

of pride at the view of its own downfall. The only use then to be made of such errors, is, to submit quietly to the humiliation they bring, for it is not being humble to resist humility. We must condemn our faults, lament them, repent of them, without seeking any palliation or excuse, viewing ourselves as in the presence of God, with all our imperfections upon our heads, and without any feeling of bitterness or discouragement, meekly improving our disgrace Thus may we draw from the serpent a cure for the venom of his wound.

Very often what we would offer to God, is not what he calls upon us to relinquish. What he demands of us is often what we most cherish; it is this Isaac of our hearts, this only son, this well-beloved, that he commands us to resign; it is his will that we should yield up all that is most dear, and short of this obedience we have no repose. "Who is he that has resisted the Almighty and been at peace?" Do you desire the blessing of God upon your efforts? Give up everything to him, and the God of peace will be with you. What consolation, what liberty, what strength, what enlargement of heart, what growth in grace, when the love of ourselves is no longer between us and our Creator, and we have made without hesitation the last sacrifice!



Never let us be discouraged with ourselves; it is not when we are conscious of our faults that we are the most wicked; on the contrary, we are less so. We see by a brighter light; and let us remember for our consolation, that we never perceive our sins till we begin to cure them. We must neither flatter, nor be impatient with ourselves, in the correction of our faults. Despondency is not a state of humility; on the contrary, it is the vexation and despair of a cowardly pride, — nothing is worse; whether we stumble or whether we fall, we must only think of rising again, and going on in our course. Our faults may be useful to us, if they cure us of a vain confidence in ourselves, and do not deprive us of an humble and salutary confidence in God. Let us bless God with as true thankfulness, if he have enabled us to make any progress in virtue, as if we had made it through our own strength, and let us not be troubled with the weak agitations of self-love; let them pass, do not think of them. God never makes us feel our weaknesses but that we may be led to seek strength from him. What is involuntary should not trouble us; but the great thing is, never to act against the light within us, and to desire to follow where God would lead us.

UPON THE AMUSEMENTS THAT BELONG TO OUR CONDITION.

We should not, it appears to me, be troubled about those amusements in which we cannot avoid taking a part. There are some people who think that they should be always mourning, that they should put a continual constraint upon themselves, and feel a disgust for those amusements to which they are obliged to submit.

For my own part, I confess that I know not how to conform myself to these rigid notions. I prefer something more simple, which I also think would be more pleasing to God. When diversions are innocent in themselves, and we enter upon them with a due regard to the condition in which we are placed by Providence, then I think that we may enjoy them with moderation and in the sight of God. Manners more reserved and harsh, less complaisant and frank, only serve to give a false idea of piety to the people of the world, who are already but too much prejudiced against it, and who believe that we cannot serve God but by a melancholy and austere life. Let us go on our way in the simplicity of our hearts, with the peace and joy that are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Whoever

walks as in the presence of God in the most indifferent things, does not cease to do his will, although he may appear to do nothing of much importance. I believe that we are conforming to the divine order and the will of Providence, when we are doing even indifferent things that belong to our condition.

Most persons, when they wish to be converted or to reform, think more of performing some difficult and extraordinary actions, than of purifying their intentions, and sacrificing their inclinations in the most common duties of their situation in life; in which they are deceived. It would be better to make less change in the action, and a deeper change in the disposition with which it is performed. When we are already pursuing an honest and regular life, it is necessary to make a change within, rather than without, if we would become Christians. God is not satisfied with the motion of the lips, nor the posture of the body, nor outward ceremonies. It is our individual love that he demands; it is an acquiescence, without any reserve, in his will. Let us carry this submissive temper, this will, inspired by the will of God, wherever his Providence conducts. Let us seek the Father of our spirits in those times that seem so vacant, and they will be full of his presence. The most useless amusements may be convert-

ed into good works, if we enter into them with proper decorum and in conformity to the will of God.

What enlargement of heart do we experience when we act with this simplicity; we walk like little children led by a tender parent, not fearing whither we may go, and with the same freedom and joy. When piety has its foundation entirely in the will of God, regarding neither fancy nor temperament, nor induced by an excessive zeal, how simple, and graceful, and lovely, are all its movements! They who possess this piety appear much like others; they are without affectation, without austerity; they are social and easy, but still live in perpetual subjection to all their duties, and in an unceasing renunciation of everything that does not in some way belong to the divine order which always governs. In short, they live in the pure vision of God, sacrificing to him every irregular movement of nature. This is the adoration in spirit and in truth that Jesus Christ has taught. All the rest is the mere ceremony of religion; the shadow rather than the substance of Christianity.

You ask by what means we can retain this purity of intention in our intercourse with the world, and while thus partaking of its pleasures. We find it difficult, you will say, to defend ourselves against the torrent of evil passions and

bad examples among men, even when we place a continual guard upon ourselves. How then shall we hope to resist, if we expose ourselves so readily to its pleasures, which may contaminate, and must dissipate even the mind of the Christian?

I acknowledge the danger, and I believe it even greater than it is said to be, and I admit the necessity of great precaution against these snares; and these are the safeguards that I would recommend, reading, prayer, and meditation upon the great truths of religion. Fix your thoughts upon some action or instruction of Jesus Christ; and when you feel convinced of the truth which you have been considering, make a serious and particular application of it for the amendment of your defects. If you are faithful to retire, morning and evening, for the practice of this duty, you will find that it will serve as a counterpoise to the dangers that surround you. I say morning and evening, because the soul, like the body, must refresh itself at stated times, lest it faint and become exhausted in its commerce with the world. But we must be firm against temptations from without and from within, if we would observe those periods. We never need be so engrossed by external things, however good they may be, as to forget the wants of the soul. I am persuaded, that,

in following these simple rules, we shall insure an abundant blessing; we shall be in the midst of pleasures, moderate, discreet, and self-possessed, without constraint, without affectation, and without the severity that gives pain to others. We shall be in the midst of these things as not being there; and still preserving a cheerful and complaisant disposition, we shall thus be all things to all men.

Should we feel at times disheartened and discouraged, a confiding thought, a simple movement of heart towards God will renew our powers. Whatever he may demand of us, he will give us at the moment the strength and the courage that we need. This is the daily bread for which we continually pray, and which will never be denied us; for our Father, far from forsaking us, waits only for our hearts to be opened, to pour into them the stream of his unfailing love.

AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

There are but two things that we can do against temptations. The first is to be faithful to the light within us, in avoiding all exposure to temptation, which we are at liberty to avoid. I



say, all that we are at liberty to avoid, because it does not always depend upon ourselves, whether we shall escape occasions of sin. Those that belong to the situation in life in which Providence has placed us, are not under our control. The other is to turn our eyes to God in the moment of temptation, to throw ourselves immediately upon the protection of heaven, as a child, when in danger, flies to the arms of its parent.

The habitual conviction of the presence of God is the sovereign remedy; it supports, it consoles, it calms us. We must not be surprised that we are tempted. We are placed here to be proved by temptations. Everything is temptation to us. Crosses irritate our pride, and prosperity flatters it; our life is a continual warfare, but Jesus Christ combats with us. We must let temptations, like a tempest, beat upon our heads, and still move on; like a traveller surprised on the way by a storm, who wraps his cloak about him, and goes on his journey in spite of the opposing elements.

In a certain sense, there is little to do in doing the will of God. Still it is true that it is a great work, because it must be without any reserve. His spirit enters the secret foldings of our hearts, and even the most upright affections, and the most necessary attachments, must be regulated

by his will; but it is not the multitude of hard duties, it is not constraint and contention that advances us in our Christian course. On the contrary, it is the yielding of our wills without restriction and without choice, to tread cheerfully every day in the path in which Providence leads us, to seek nothing, to be discouraged by nothing, to see our duty in the present moment, to trust all else without reserve to the will and power of God. Let us pray to our heavenly Father that our wills may be swallowed up in his.

UPON FIDELITY IN LITTLE THINGS.

Great virtues are rare; the occasions for them are very rare; and when they do occur, we are prepared for them, we are excited by the grandeur of the sacrifice, we are supported either by the splendor of the deed in the eyes of the world, or by the self-complacency that we experience from the performance of an uncommon action. Little things are unforeseen; they return every moment; they come in contact with our pride, our indolence, our haughtiness, our readiness to take offence; they contradict our inclinations perpetually. We would much rather make certain great sacrifices to God, however

violent and painful they might be, upon condition that we should be rewarded by liberty to follow our own desires and habits in the details of life. It is, however, only by fidelity in little things, that a true and constant love to God can be distinguished from a passing fervor of spirit.

All great things are only a great number of small things that have been carefully collected together. He who loses nothing will soon grow rich. Besides, let us remember, that God looks in our actions only for the motive. The world judges us by appearance; God counts for nothing what is most dazzling to men. What he desires is a pure intention, true docility, and a sincere self-renunciation. All this is exercised more frequently, and in a way that tries us more severely, on common than on great occasions. Sometimes we cling more tenaciously to a trifle than to a great interest. It would give us more pain to relinquish an amusement than to bestow a great sum in charity. We are more easily led away by little things, because we believe them more innocent, and imagine that we are less attached to them; nevertheless, when God deprives us of them, we soon discover from the pain of privation, how excessive and inexcusable was our attachment to them. The sincerity of our piety is also impeached by the neglect of minor duties. What probability is there, that we

should not hesitate to make great sacrifices, when we shrink from slight ones?

But what is most dangerous to the mind, is the habit it acquires of unfaithfulness. True love to God thinks nothing small. All that can please or displease him is great. It does not produce constraint and weak scruples, but it places no limits to its fidelity; it acts with simplicity, and as it is not embarrassed with things that God has not commanded, it never hesitates a moment about what he does command, whether it be great or small.

Those persons who are naturally less exact, ought to make an inviolable law with themselves about trifles. They are tempted to despise them; they have a habit of thinking them of no consequence; they are not aware of the insensible growth of the passions; they forget even their own most fatal experience. They trust to a delusive courage, though it has before failed them, for the support of their fidelity.

"This is a trifle," they say, "it is nothing." True; but it is a nothing that will be everything to you, a trifle that you prefer to the will of God, a trifle that will be your ruin. There is no real elevation of mind in a contempt of little things; it is, on the contrary, from too narrow views, that we consider those things of little importance, which have in fact such extensive

our own minds, is really worse than to be engrossed with outward things, because it appears like wisdom, and yet is not; we do not think of curing it; we pride ourselves upon it; we approve of it; it gives us an unnatural strength; it is a sort of frenzy; we are not conscious of it; we are dying, and we think ourselves in health.

Simplicity consists in a just medium, in which we are neither too much excited, nor too composed. The soul is not carried away by outward things, so that it cannot make all necessary reflections; neither does it make those continual references to self, that a jealous sense of its own excellence multiplies to infinity. That freedom of the soul, which looks straight onward in its path, losing no time to reason upon its steps, to study them, or to contemplate those that it has already taken, is true simplicity.

The first step in the progress of the soul is disengagement from outward things, that it may enter into itself, and contemplate its true interests; this is a wise self-love. The second is, to join to this the idea of God whom it fears; this is the feeble beginning of true wisdom; but the soul is still fixed upon itself; it is afraid that it does not fear God enough; it is still thinking of itself. These anxieties about ourselves are far removed from that peace and liberty, which a

true and simple love inspires; but it is not yet time for this; the soul must pass through this trouble; this operation of the Spirit of God in our hearts comes to us gradually; we approach step by step to this simplicity. In the third and last state, we begin to think of God more frequently, we think of ourselves less, and insensibly we lose ourselves in him.

The more gentle and docile the soul is, the more it advances in this simplicity. It does not become blind to its own defects, and unconscious of its imperfections; it is more than ever sensible of them; it feels a horror of the slightest sin; it sees more clearly its own corruption; but this sensibility does not arise from dwelling upon itself, but by the light from the presence of God we see how far removed we are from infinite purity.

Thus simplicity is free in its course, since it makes no preparation; but it can only belong to the soul that is purified by a true penitence. It must be the fruit of a perfect renunciation of self, and an unreserved love of God. But though they, who become penitents, and tear themselves from the vanities of the world, make self the object of thought, yet they must avoid an excessive and unquiet occupation with themselves, such as would trouble, and embarrass, and retard them in their progress. Dwelling too



much upon self, produces in weak minds useless scruples and superstition, and in stronger minds a presumptuous wisdom. Both are contrary to true simplicity, which is free and direct, and gives itself up, without reserve and with a generous self-forgetfulness, to the Father of spirits. How free, how intrepid are the motions, how glorious the progress that the soul makes, when delivered from all low, and interested, and unquiet cares.

If we desire that our friends be simple and free with us, disencumbered of self in their intimacy with us, will it not please God, who is our truest friend, that we should surrender our souls to him, without fear or reserve, in that holy and sweet communion with himself which he allows us? It is this simplicity, which is the perfection of the true children of God. This is the end that we must have in view, and to which we must be continually advancing.

This deliverance of the soul from all useless, and selfish, and unquiet cares, brings to it a peace and freedom that are unspeakable; this is true simplicity. It is easy to perceive, at the first glance, how glorious it is; but experience alone can make us comprehend the enlargement of heart that it produces. We are then like a child in the arms of its parent; we wish nothing more, we fear nothing, we yield ourselves up

to this pure attachment, we are not anxious about what others think of us, all our motions are free, graceful and happy. We do not judge ourselves, and we do not fear to be judged. Let us strive after this lovely simplicity; let us seek the path that leads to it. The farther we are from it, the more we must hasten our steps towards it. Very far from being simple, most Christians are not even sincere. They are not only disingenuous, but they are false, and they dissemble with their neighbor, with God, and with themselves. They practise a thousand little arts that indirectly distort the truth. Alas! every man is a liar; those even who are naturally upright, sincere, and ingenuous, and who are what is called simple and natural, still have this jealous and sensitive reference to self in everything, which secretly nourishes pride, and prevents that true simplicity, which is the renunciation and perfect oblivion of self.

But it will be said, How can I help being occupied with myself? A crowd of selfish fears trouble me, and tyrannize over my mind, and excite a lively sensibility. The principal means to cure this is to yield yourself up sincerely to God, to place all your interests, pleasures, and reputation in his hands, to receive all the sufferings that he may inflict upon you in this scene of humiliation, as trials and tests of your love to

him, neither to fear the scrutiny, nor to avoid the censure of mankind. This state of willing acquiescence produces true liberty, and this liberty brings perfect simplicity. A soul that is liberated from the little earthly interests of self-love, becomes confiding, and moves straight onward, and its views expand even to infinity, just in proportion as its forgetfulness of self increases, and its peace is profound even in the midst of trouble.

I have already said that the opinion of the world conforms to the judgment of God, upon this noble simplicity. The world admires, even in its votaries, the free and easy manners of a person who has lost sight of self. But the simplicity, which is produced by a devotion to external things, still more vain than self, is not the true simplicity; it is only an image of it, and cannot represent its greatness. They who cannot find the substance, pursue the shadow; and shadow as it is, it has a charm, for it has some resemblance to the reality that they have lost. A person full of defects, who does not attempt to hide them, who does not seek to dazzle, who does not affect either talents or virtue, who does not appear to think of himself more than of others, but to have lost sight of this self of which we are so jealous, pleases greatly in spite of his defects. This false simplicity is

taken for the true. On the contrary, a person full of talents, of virtues, and of exterior graces, if he appear artificial, if he be thinking of himself, if he affect the very best things, is a tedious and wearisome companion that no one likes.

Nothing, then, we grant, is more lovely and grand than simplicity. But some will say, Must we never think of self? We need not practise this constraint; in trying to be simple we may lose simplicity. What then must we do? Make no rule about it, but be satisfied that you affect nothing. When you are disposed to speak of yourself from vanity, you can only repress this strong desire, by thinking of God, or of what you are called upon by him to do. Simplicity does not consist in false shame or false modesty, any more than in pride or vainglory. When vanity would lead to egotism, we have only to turn from self; when, on the contrary, there is a necessity of speaking of ourselves, we must not reason too much about it, we must look straight at the end. But what will they think of me? They will think I am boasting; I shall be suspected in speaking so freely of my own concerns. None of these unquiet reflections should trouble us for one moment. Let us speak freely, ingenuously, and simply of ourselves, when we are called upon to speak. It is thus that St. Paul spoke often in his epistles. What true greatness

there is in speaking with simplicity of one's self. Vainglory is sometimes hidden under an air of modesty and reserve. People do not wish to proclaim their own merit, but they would be very glad that others should discover it. They would have the reputation both of virtue and of the desire to hide it.

As to the matter of speaking against ourselves, I do not either blame or recommend it. When it arises from true simplicity, and that hatred with which God inspires us of our sins, it is admirable, and thus I regard it in many holy men. But usually the surest and most simple way is not to speak unnecessarily of one's self, either good or evil. Self-love often prefers abuse to oblivion and silence; and when we have often spoken ill of ourselves, we are quite ready to be reconciled, just like angry lovers, who, after a quarrel, redouble their blind devotion to each other.

This simplicity is manifested in the exterior. As the mind is freed from this idea of self, we act more naturally, all art ceases, we act rightly, without thinking of what we are doing, by a sort of directness of purpose, that is inexplicable to those who have no experience of it. To some we may appear less simple than those who have a more grave and practised manner; but these are people of bad taste, who take the affectation

of modesty for modesty itself, and who have no knowledge of true simplicity. This true simplicity has sometimes a careless and irregular appearance, but it has the charm of truth and candor, and sheds around it, I know not what of pure and innocent, of cheerful and peaceful; a loveliness that wins us when we see it intimately and with pure eyes.

How desirable is this simplicity! who will give it to me? I will quit all else; it is the pearl of great price.

FROM THE DIRECTIONS FOR THE CONSCIENCE OF A KING.

COMPOSED FOR THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

It is commonly said, that the private vices of kings are less injurious than the mistakes they make as rulers. For my own part, I boldly assert the contrary; and I insist that all their defects as men, are of infinite importance to the community. Examine your actions, then, in detail. Subjects are servile imitators of their rulers, especially when the passions are concerned. Have you then set any example of a



criminal love? If you have, your authority has given distinction to infamy; you have broken down the barriers of honor and decency; you have afforded a triumph to vice and impudence; you have taught your subjects not to blush at what is disgraceful. Fatal lesson, that they never will forget! It would be better, said Jesus Christ, to be thrown with a mill-stone round your neck into the depth of the sea, than to cause one of these little ones to offend.

Vice is in itself a contagious poison. Human nature is always liable to the contamination: it is ever ready to break the yoke of modesty. A spark causes a flame. A single action of a king may produce an increase and succession of crimes through many nations, and through distant ages. Have you not given any of these fatal examples? Can you think that your irregularity will be secret? O no! the crimes of rulers are never secret. Their good actions may be hidden; people are slow to believe them; but evil is believed upon the slightest suspicion. Have you discountenanced irreligion in its lightest expression? Have you manifested your indignation at impiety? Have you made it felt, and left no one to doubt your sentiments? Have you never been influenced by a false shame, that has made you blush for the gospel? Have you shown by your conversation and

actions, your sincere faith and zeal for Christianity? Have you used your authority to silence impiety? Have you shrunk with horror from immodest levity, equivocal expressions, and all other marks of licentiousness?

Have you committed no injustice towards foreign nations? The poor wretch, who, from extreme necessity, steals a purse upon the highway, is hanged; while the man who unjustly subjugates a neighboring state, is called a hero. The unlawful seizure of a meadow or a vineyard, is regarded as an offence against God; but no account is made of taking possession of cities and provinces. To take a field from an individual, is a great sin; to take a country from a nation, is an innocent and glorious action. Whence are these ideas of justice? Will God judge thus? Ought we to be less just in great, than in little things? Is not justice still justice, when great interests are at stake? Should we not have some scruples about committing a crime against a million of men, against a whole country, when we dare not injure an individual? All, then, that is taken by mere conquest, is taken unjustly, and ought to be restored. A treaty of peace, that is made from necessity, because one party is the stronger, is like that which is made with a robber, who has his pistol at your head. Your enemy is your brother;

you cannot forget this, without forgetting all humanity. You have no right to do him any harm when you can avoid it. You have no right to take up arms against him but in extreme necessity. And in making a treaty with him, it is no longer a question of war, of arms, but of peace, justice, humanity, and good faith. And it is more infamous to deceive in a treaty of peace with a nation, than in a private contract with an individual.

FROM A LETTER TO THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY, UPON THE SAME SUBJECT.

NEVER let your high rank prevent the exercise of kindness to the most insignificant. Put yourself in their place; and this condescension will not lessen your authority or their respect. Study men always; learn how to make use of them without familiarity. Seek merit, though it should be in the most obscure corner of the world: it is usually modest and retired. Virtue cannot penetrate the crowd; it has neither eagerness nor presumption: it allows itself to be forgotten.

Do not be subdued by the artful and by flatterers. Let them feel that you do not love either their praises or their meanness. Put trust only in those, who have the courage to contra

dict you with respect, and who value your character more than your favor. Let all the world see, that you think and feel as a prince should think and feel. It is important, that the good love you, that the wicked fear you, and that all esteem you. Make haste then to correct yourself, that you may labor successfully to improve others.

True piety has in it nothing weak, nothing sad, nothing constrained. It enlarges the heart; it is simple, free, and attractive. The kingdom of God does not consist in a scrupulous observance of trifling formalities; it is in each individual the performance of the duties that belong to his condition. A great prince ought not to serve God in the same manner as a hermit, or a private individual.

ADVICE.

Feeling as affectionate an interest in the happiness of the whole human race as in his own nation in particular, and being as true an enemy to persecution as he was a sincere friend to justice and equity, the following was the wise advice that Fenelon gave to the Chevalier St. George, when he visited him at Cambrai, in 1709 – 10

Above all things never compel your subjects to change their religion. No human power can

force the impenetrable intrenchments of liberty in the human heart. Force can never persuade men; it can only make hypocrites. When kings interfere with religion, instead of protecting it, they enslave it. Grant to all religions a political toleration; not equally approving of all, as if you were indifferent, but patiently allowing all that God allows, and endeavoring to lead men by gentle persuasion.

Study the advantages of the peculiar form of government of your own country, and the sentiments you ought to cherish towards your senate. This tribunal can do nothing without you. Have you not then sufficient power? You can do nothing without their consent. Are you not happy that you are at liberty to do good, and not free to do evil? Every wise prince should rejoice to be only the executor of the laws, and to have a supreme council who can moderate his authority. The paternal relation is the true model for governments; and every good father acts in concert with his wisest and most experienced children.

ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

Nothing is more neglected than the education of girls. Custom and the caprice of mothers determine it altogether. A careful education of boys is thought necessary for the public good; though it is frequently as defective as that of girls. Women in general have feebler minds than men; the weaker the mind is, the more important it is to fortify it. They have not only duties to fulfil, but duties which form the basis of social life. Is it not women, who are the blessing or the ruin of families; who regulate the detail of domestic affairs; and who, of course, govern what most nearly relates to man? Thus they have a decided influence on the happiness or unhappiness of those who are connected with them. A judicious, industrious, religious woman is the soul of her family. Men, who exercise authority in public, cannot by their deliberations affect the general good, if women do not aid them. The occupations of women are not less important to the public than those of men; they have families to govern, husbands to make happy, and children to educate.

It is ignorance which renders women frivolous. When they have arrived at a certain age, without habits of application, they cannot ac

quire a taste for it; whatever is serious appears to them sad; whatever demands continued attention fatigues them. The inclination for amusement, which is strong in youth, and the example of persons of the same age, who are devoted to pleasure, have inspired them with a dread of an orderly and laborious life. At an early age, they want that experience and authority that would make them useful at home. They do not understand the importance of domestic occupations, unless their mothers have taken pains to instruct them. In this state of uselessness, a girl abandons herself to indolence, which is a languor of the soul, an inexhaustible source of ennui. She accustoms herself to sleep a third more than is necessary for the preservation of health; too much sleep enfeebles her, renders her delicate; whereas moderate sleep, accompanied by regular exercise, would produce gayety and strength, forming the true perfection of the body, to say nothing of its influence on the mind. Idleness and weakness thus being united to ignorance, there arises from this union a pernicious taste for amusements. Girls brought up in this idle way have an ill-regulated imagination. Their curiosity, not being directed to substantial things, is turned towards vain and dangerous objects. They read books which nourish their vanity, and become passionately

fond of romances, comedies, and fanciful adventures. Their minds become visionary; they accustom themselves to the extravagant language of the heroines of romance, and are spoiled for common life.

To remedy all these evils, it is necessary to begin the education of girls with their earliest infancy. At that tender age, when they are left to the care of weak and often of unprincipled women, the deepest impressions are sometimes made; impressions, which have an influence during life. Before children can speak, we may instruct them. They are learning a language, which they will soon speak with more correctness, than scholars acquire in the use of languages which they have studied, at a more mature age. For what is learning a language? It is not merely crowding the memory with words; it is observing the sense of each particular word. The child, in the midst of its cries and plays, notices of what object each word is the sign. It makes this observation sometimes in considering the natural movements of bodies which it touches or sees. It is true that the minds of children have an admirable facility to receive impressions from images. Thus you may give them, by the assistance of tones and gestures, an inclination to be with honest and virtuous persons; and by the different expres-



sions of the countenance and the tone of the voice, inspire a dread of those whom they have seen angry. I speak of these little things as important, for there can be no doubt that deep impressions can thus be made on the minds of children. It is desirable that instruction should not be forced on children; that everything should be avoided that tends to excite the passions; that they should gently be deprived of whatever they desire with too much ardor. If the disposition of a child is good, we may thus render it docile, patient, firm, gay, and tranquil; whereas, if this early period is neglected, it will become impetuous and irritable through life. Its habits are forming; and its soul, which has no bias towards any particular object, easily turns to evil. At a more advanced age, when reason is developing itself, every word we say should tend to inspire a love of truth, and a contempt for every kind of dissimulation.

We should never coax children; if we do, we teach them to disguise the truth, and they never forget it. We must lead them by reason as much as possible. They observe everything. We must accustom them to speak little. The pleasure we derive from playful children often spoils them. We teach them to say everything that comes into their minds; to speak of things of which they have no distinct idea. This habit

of judging with precipitation, of speaking of things without understanding them, remains during the rest of their lives, and forms a very defective order of mind.

We must take care of children, without letting them perceive that we think of them; let them see, that it is your love and their helplessness, that makes you attend to them, and not their merits. Content yourself with forming them by little and little; even when you can advance the mind of a child very far, without forcing it, you ought to fear to do it; for the danger of vanity and presumption always outweighs the advantage of that premature education, which makes so much noise. We must content ourselves with following and aiding nature. Children, being ignorant, have many questions to ask; we must answer them correctly, and sometimes add little comparisons, in order to illustrate our meaning. If they judge of anything without understanding it well, we must try them by difficult questions, in order to make them feel their ignorance, without discouraging them; and at the same time we must make them perceive, not by vague praises, but by some decided mark of esteem, that we approve of them, if, when they are in doubt, they ask an explanation of what they do not understand, and then decide after reflection. In this manner we may gently

teach them to be truly modest. From the time that their reason begins to develop itself, we must guard them against presumption. You see, you will say, that you are better able to exercise your reason now, than you were last year; in a year more, you will know things which you are not capable of understanding now. If last year you had attempted to judge of things which you know now, but of which you were then ignorant, you would not have judged correctly. We commit a great error when we pretend to know what is beyond our comprehension.

The curiosity of children is an inclination of nature, which anticipates instruction. We must not fail to profit by it. For example, in the country they see a mill, and they wish to know what it is; we must show them how it is that corn is thus prepared for man. They perceive reapers; we must explain to them what they do; how corn is sowed and multiplied in the earth. If you are in the city, surrounded by shops where several arts are exercised, and different kinds of merchandise are sold, you must not be impatient at their questions; they are so many openings that nature offers you to facilitate instruction. Listen to them with pleasure; by this means you will insensibly teach them how all those things are made, which man uses

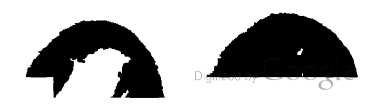
Thus, gradually, without a particular study, they will learn the best manner of doing things, and the just value of each. Such knowledge should not be despised, since every one ought to be secure against imposition in his expenses. I think it is desirable to use indirect teaching, to awaken the attention of children. Let us mingle instruction with their plays; let Wisdom show herself to them, but at intervals, and with a smiling face. Beware of fatiguing them by ill-judged exactness. If virtue offer itself to a child under a melancholy and constrained aspect, if liberty and license present themselves under an agreeable form, all is lost, your labor is in vain.

Never permit a child to be flattered by its attendants; we adopt the manners and sentiments of those whom we love. The pleasure they find in the society of ill-bred people, gradually induces them to tolerate what they should despise. In order to render good men agreeable to children, we should lead them to remark what is amiable in them, their sincerity, modesty, fidelity, and discretion, but above all, their piety, which is the source of all the rest. If they have anything in their manners unpleasant, say to them, Piety does not produce faults; when it is perfect, it cures them. But after all, we must not obstinately endeavor to make them like good people, whose manners are disagreeable. It is

important for teachers to know their own faults, ask your friends to point them out to you. Children are very nice observers, and they will often perceive your slightest defects. In general, those who govern children forgive nothing in them, but everything in themselves. This excites in children a spirit of criticism and malignity, so that when they discover a fault they are delighted. You must guard against this evil. Do not be afraid of speaking of faults which you have committed before a child. If you see it capable of reasoning on the subject, say, that you wish to set it the example of correcting its faults, by correcting your own; your imperfections will thus be the means of instructing and benefiting your child, and you will avoid the contempt you would otherwise awaken.

At the same time, you will seek every means to render agreeable all that you exact. If you have anything tiresome to propose, show its utility. We must always present to children the attainment of an agreeable or useful object, and never attempt to govern them by harsh and absolute authority. As their reason strengthens, we should reason with them. An austere and imperious air must be avoided, except in cases of extreme necessity, for children are generally timid and bashful. Make them love you; let them be free with you; let them not hide their

faults from you; be indulgent to those who conceal nothing from you. Do not be astonished at their failings; but, on the contrary, pity their weaknesses. It is true, that this treatment will impose less the restraint of fear, but it will produce confidence and sincerity. We must always commence with a conduct open, gay, and familiar, without trifling. By this means we learn to understand children, and know their real characters; whereas, if we subject them to obedience merely to authority, we govern by fatiguing forms, we produce a disgust of virtue, the love of which it should be our first object to inspire in them. A child of lively imagination dislikes virtue and study, because it dislikes the person who speaks of it to them; and this severe education makes it retain through life painful ideas of religion. We must often tolerate things which we wish to correct, and wait for the moment when the mind of the child will be in a state to profit by instruction. Never correct it in anger; if you do, it will be perceived, and you will lose your authority. Watch for the best moment to correct it. Do not tell it of its fault, without leaving it the hope of improvement. We ought to consider that children are weak; that their age renders them extremely sensible to pleasure; and that we have no right to require from them more than they can give. When we



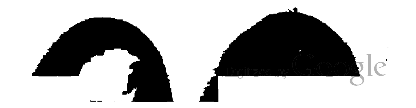
speak to them of words and things that they do not understand, we often leave a dangerous impression of ennui and sadness on their minds.

Though we cannot, at all times, avoid employing fear in the government of unruly children, we must never have recourse to it, until we have tried every other method. We should always make children understand why we make use of fear; for joy and confidence ought to be habitually cherished in them, otherwise their minds will become dull, and thus will lose courage. If they are gay, they will be irritated; if timid, they will be rendered stupid. Like all violent remedies, fear should never be employed but in desperate cases. When we punish them, the suffering should be as 'ight as possible, but accompanied by every circumstance which can inspire the child with shame and remorse. Show it how gladly you would have avoided coming to this extremity; show that you suffer also; speak before the child to others of the misfortune of being so deficient in reason and sensibility as to require chastisement. Omit your accustomed marks of affection, until you see that the child requires consolation; make its punishment public or private, as you shall judge will be most salutary.

We ought to adapt general rules to particular circumstances. Neither men nor children always

resemble themselves. What is good to-day is dangerous to-morrow. A plan of conduct that never varies, cannot be useful. Forms should be used as little as possible, in their lessons. We may impart instruction more useful than their lessons convey, by our conversation. I have known several children, who have learned to read as a play; amusing stories have been read to them; they have gradually learnt their letters; after this, they have been anxious themselves to go to the source whence they have derived so much pleasure. The greatest defect of common education is, that we are in the habit of putting pleasure all on one side, and weariness on the other; all weariness in study, all pleasure in idleness. Let us try to change this association; let us render studies agreeable; let us present it under the aspect of liberty and pleasure; let us sometimes permit study to be interrupted by little sallies of gayety. These interruptions are necessary to relax the mind.

We must acknowledge, that of all the difficulties in education, none are comparable to that of educating children who are deficient in sensibility. Children of lively sensibility are liable to terrible faults; passion and presumption lead them astray; but they possess great resources, and often return from afar. Instruction is in them a hidden germ, which springs up and yields



fruit, when experience comes to the assistance of reason. At all events, we can render them attentive, awaken their curiosity, and make them interested in our instructions. We can stimulate them by a principle of honor. Whereas on indolent minds we have no hold. All their thoughts are wandering; they are never where they ought to be. We cannot touch them to the quick, even by correction; they hear all, and they feel nothing. The best education will be thrown away, if we do not begin at an early age to remedy this evil.

It is necessary to observe, that in some children we are very much deceived at first. They appear charming, because the early graces of infancy throw a lustre over all their conduct. Every trait of intelligence that we see in them, surprises us, because we did not expect it at that age; every fault of judgment is permitted, and in our eyes has the charm of ingenuousness; we mistake animal spirits for intelligence. Hence it is that promising children, who are celebrated at five years of age, fall into neglect and are forgotten as they grow older. Of all the faculties of children, reason is the only one on which we can depend; if we cultivate it carefully, it always grows with them. The graces of childhood pass away; vivacity vanishes; even tenderness of heart is often lost; for the passions

and the society of men insensibly harden the young, in their intercourse with the world. Try then to discover, through the graces of childhood, whether the character you have to form be wanting in curiosity, and insensible to virtuous ambition. In this case it is almost impossible for those who have the care of the child, not to be disheartened by a labor that affords so little interest. We must hasten to touch all the springs of the soul, that we may awaken it from this slumber. Be careful not to fatigue it, not to overload memory; endeavor to animate it; do not fear to show it all of which it is capable. Be contented with little progress; notice its slightest success; excite its ambition; let it see the error of distrusting its own powers. Lead the child to laugh freely with you, at its timidity; point out those, whose natural character is as timid as its own, but who have conquered their temperament; teach it by direct instruction, that timidity and idleness paralyze the intellect, that men who have these faults, whatever talents they possess, are imbecile, and degrade themselves. But be careful not to give these instructions in an austere and impatient tone; for nothing sends the feelings back to the heart of a timid child like harshness. On the contrary, redouble your efforts to awaken the necessary zeal, by pleasures suited to its age and character. We

must endeavor to give to children of this class a taste for improvement; we must let them pursue whatever may cure them of their disgust to study, must permit some infringement of rules, taking care that they do not go to excess. It is more difficult to create taste in those who have none, than to regulate an incorrect taste. There is another sort of sensibility more difficult to awaken, that of friendship. From the time a child is capable of affection, it is desirable to turn its heart towards those persons who do it good. By its affections we can lead it to do whatever we wish; we have a certain influence over it; if we know how to use it, we have only to fear for the choice it makes of its friends.

There is another class of children, who are naturally indifferent, reserved, and calculating. They deceive their parents; they only pretend to love them; they study their inclinations in order to conform to them; they appear more docile than other children of the same age, who act without disguise, according to their humor; their docility, which is a concealed selfishness, appears to be genuine, and their dissimulation is not discovered until it is too late to correct it. If there is any fault of a child which education cannot cure, it is without doubt this; and yet it is much more common than we have an idea of. Parents cannot resolve to believe that

their children want feeling; and as no one dares to tell them of it, the evil increases. The chief remedy is, to permit children from the earliest age, to discover their inclinations, that we may know what they are; they are naturally simple and confiding, but the slightest restraint will be likely to inspire them with a wish to disguise, and they will never recover their simplicity.

It is true that God alone gives goodness and tenderness of heart; we can only try to excite it by generous examples, by liberal sentiments, by disinterestedness, and by disapprobation of those who love themselves too well. Before children have lost their ingenuousness, we must make them taste the pleasure of cordial and reciprocal friendship; those who surround them, therefore, should be amiable, sincere, frank, and disinterested; the persons who have the care of them had better have other faults, than be at all wanting in these virtues.

Parents should be at all times affectionate and disinterested in their manners towards each other; it is from their parents that children often learn to love self. We must also, in their presence, avoid all feigned demonstrations of friendship, that are often substituted for a love that ought to be real.

But we more frequently see children enthusiastic than indifferent. They never see two



persons disagree, without taking a lively interest on one or the other side; they are always full of affections and aversions without foundation; they see no fault in those they like, no good in those they dislike. We must gradually teach them that we are acquainted with all the good qualities of the persons they love, and all the faults there are in those they dislike. Do not press the matter; they will gradually see the truth. Then lead them to think of their own mistakes, and show them how unreasonable they are disposed to be. Relate to them errors like these, that have happened in your own youth; above all, point out to them the mixture of good and evil, that is to be found in human nature, to check the extravagance of their friendships, and the violence of their aversions.

Never promise children, as a reward for their good conduct, either dress or sweet-meats; by doing this you create in them two faults; in the first place, you teach them to estimate highly what they ought to despise; and in the second, you deprive yourself of the means of establishing recompenses, which facilitate your labor. Be cautious how you ever force them to study. You must have as few rules as possible, and for those few, must have a good reason. Though we should fear to excite the vanity of children by flattery, judicious praise is very necessary.

St. Paul often employed it to encourage the weak. We may also recompense children by innocent plays, by walks, conversations, little presents of pictures, or geographical charts.

Children are extremely fond of stories: we see them transported with joy, or shedding tears, at their recital. Choose some fable at once innocent and ingenious; show them the serious intention of the author; when you have related one fable, wait until the child asks for another; when their curiosity is excited, recount certain select passages of history; leave off in an interesting part; postpone the rest for the next day, leaving them impatient to hear the end; animate your recital by a familiar tone of voice; make your characters speak for themselves. This delights a child, particularly if he considers it as a reward. If the child has facility of language, he will, of his own accord, wish to repeat it to another person, you can choose one of his attendants who will be anxious to hear the story; he will delight to tell it: do not appear to remark his mistakes, but when he has repeated several, give him some general advice upon the manner of relating a story, which is, to render it simple, short, and correct, by a choice of circumstances which shall best represent the whole.

We must endeavor to give them a taste for Sacred History, rather than any other; not by



telling them that it is more interesting, but by making them feel that it is so. Lead them to remark the important events that are to be found in it, such as the Creation, the Deluge, the sacrifice of Isaac, the birth and flight of Moses. By this means, we shall not only awaken the curiosity of children, but we shall lay the foundation of religious knowledge, which consists of a tissue of wonderful facts. Recount to them, in detail, the history of Jesus Christ; select the most striking parts of the Gospel, his preaching in the temple at twelve years of age, his retreat to the desert, his temptation, the multiplication of bread, Lazarus resuscitated, the entrance into Jerusalem; describe his death, and his rising from the tomb. All these events managed with discretion, will fill the imagination and affectionate heart of a child with lively images of all the remarkable events which have happened since the creation of the world; it will see the hand of God forever raised to confound the impious and protect the just. But we must select, among these histories, only such as afford pleasing or magnificent images, so as to render religion beautiful, lovely, and sublime.

We should never laugh at anything which is in any way associated with religion, before children. We sometimes indulge ourselves in ridiculing the devotion of a smple mind, but we

commit a great fault in so doing. We should speak of God with seriousness and reverence, and never trifle upon sacred subjects. In matters of propriety, we must be careful before children.

As women are in danger of superstition, we must try to enlighten and strengthen their minds. We must accustom them not to admit things without authority. Nothing is so painful as to see people of intellect and piety, shudder at the thoughts of death; a woman ought to know how to resist weak fears, to be firm in danger, and to feel that a Christian, of either sex, should never be a coward; the soul of Christianity, if we may so call it, lies in the disregard of this life, and the love of another.

There are several faults which are common to girls brought up in indolence and timidity; they are incapable of a firm and steady conduct; there is a good deal of affectation in those ill-founded alarms, and those tears that they shed so easily. We must begin by treating them with indifference; we must repress our too tender love, little flatteries, and compliments. We must teach them to speak in a concise manner. Genuine good taste consists in saying much in a few words, in choosing among our thoughts, in having some order and arrangement in what we relate, in speaking with composure; whereas, women in general are enthusiastic in their lan-



guage. Little can be expected from a woman, who does not know how to express her thoughts with correctness and how to be silent.

Girls are timid and full of false shame, which is a source of dissimulation. To correct this, we must lead them to discover their thoughts without disguise; when they are tired, to say so; and not oblige them to appear to enjoy books or society, while fatigued by them. When they have unfortunately acquired the habit of disguising their feelings, we must show them by examples, that it is possible to be discreet and prudent, without being deceitful; and tell them that prudence consists in saying little, and distrusting ourselves more than others, not in dissembling speeches. Simplicity and truth excite more confidence, and succeed better, even in this world, than dissimulation.

What is there more delightful than to be sincere, tranquil, in harmony with our conscience, having nothing to fear and nothing to pretend; whereas she who dissembles is always agitated, and under the necessity of hiding one deception by a hundred others, and yet, with all these efforts, she never fails to be discovered; sooner or later she passes for what she is.

If the world is deceived respecting some solitary action, it is not so respecting the whole life. Truth always peeps out at some place · they are

often the dupes even of those they wish to deceive, for people pretend to believe them, and they think themselves esteemed when they are despised; at least they cannot prevent suspicions, and what can be more painful to a wise self-love, than to inspire doubt and distrust.

Teach girls to say but little, and that little according to the occasion and the person they address; let them be reminded that *finesse* always belongs to a mean heart and a weak mind; people are artful because they have something to conceal, and do not dare to appear what they are. Take notice of the evil of certain little artifices that are committed, and the contempt which falls upon those who are guilty of them. From time to time deprive them of what they have gained by art, and tell them they shall have whatever they want when they ask for it openly. Pity their little infirmities, in order to induce them to discover them; false shame is the most dangerous of all defects, and the first to be corrected, for it will render all others incurable.

Guard children against the subtlety that leads another into a deception, while they appear not to have been the cause of the deceit themselves; teach them that there is more baseness in such refinements, than in common art; say to a child that God is truth itself, that it is trifling with God to trifle with truth, and that he has given

us language to be used in speaking with precision and simplicity, that we may say nothing but what is just and true. We must, above all things, avoid praising children when they discover art in trifling; far from appearing to think such things pretty and amusing, we should correct them severely. When we praise children for such faults, we teach them that to deceive, is to be ingenious.

The education of women, like that of men, should tend to prepare them for their duties; the difference of their employments will of course render their studies different. It is the duty of a woman to educate her children, the boys until a certain age, and girls until they are married. How much wisdom is requisite to manage the mind and disposition of each child, so as to guide their intellects, manage their humors, to anticipate the effects of their growing passions, and to rectify their errors. How much prudence should a mother have in order to maintain her authority over them, without losing their friendship and their confidence. Surely the mother of a family ought to possess a religious, mature, firm mind, acquainted with the human heart. St. Paul attaches such importance to the education of children, that he says, it is by "mothers the souls of children are saved."

I shall not attempt to specify all that they

ought to know, in order to educate their children well. To do this, it would be necessary to enter into an entire detail of their studies; but we must not omit the sūbject of economy. Women in general are apt to neglect it, and think it proper only for the lower classes; those women, especially, who are brought up in idleness and indolence, disdain the detail of domestic life. It is nevertheless from ignorance that the science of economy is despised. The polished Greeks and Romans took care to instruct themselves in this art. That mind is of a low order, which can only speak well, and cannot act well; we often meet with women, who utter wise maxims, yet, nevertheless, are very frivolous in their conduct. It is well to accustom girls from their childhood to have the care of something; to make out accounts, to understand the value of things, and their uses; but we must be careful not to let economy lead to avarice. A reasonable mind desires, by a frugal and industrious life, to avoid the shame and injustice that is produced by extravagance. We ought to retrench in superfluous expenses, only that we may have more to bestow in charity and friendship; it is good order, and not sordid savings, that enlarges our means. Do not fail to represent the foolish economy of those women who save a lamp, while they are careless in their general expenses



Attend as much to neatness as you do to economy. Accustom girls never to suffer anything about them to be unclean or in disorder; lead them to notice the slightest derangement in a house; say to them that nothing contributes more to economy and neatness, than keeping things in their proper place. This may seem trifling, yet it leads to very important consequences. For then when anything is wanted, there will be no difficulty in finding it; and when it is done with, it will be returned to the place it was taken from. This exact order forms the most essential part of neatness; for instance, a dish will not be soiled or broken, if it is put in its proper place as soon as it has been used; the carefulness which makes us place things in order, makes us keep them clean. Joined to all these advantages, is that of giving to domestics a habit of neatness and activity, by obliging them to place things in order, and keep them clean.

At the same time we must avoid fastidiousness; neatness, when it is moderate, is a virtue; but when it is carried to an extreme, it narrows the mind. Teach children that it is a weakness to be troubled because a dish is not properly seasoned, or a chair is put in the wrong place. This fastidiousness, if it be not repressed, becomes one of the most dangerous faults; com-

mon folks are disagreeable and wearisome to them. We should teach them early that we are not to judge of any one merely by his manners; and point out to them people whose manners are unpleasant, but who, nevertheless, having a good heart and a correct mind, are a thousand times more estimable than they, who, under an accomplished address, conceal a bad heart, capable of all kinds of baseness and dissimulation. Say to them, that those who are apt to feel a disgust at everything, are usually weak. There is no man from whose conversation we may not draw some good, and though we should choose the best when we have the freedom of choice, yet we may be consoled when we have not: we may lead people to speak of those subjects with which they are acquainted, and thus derive some instruction from the most ignorant.

The science of teaching others to serve us, is not a slight one; we must choose servants who have principle and religion; we must understand their different duties, the time and the labor which ought to be given to each thing; the manner of doing it well, and what is necessary to do it with. For instance, you might blame a servant for not having cooked a dish sooner than it was possible to do it; or you would be in danger of being cheated by your servant from your ignorance of the quantity

necessary to use in doing a thing. We must learn to understand the temper, and to manage the minds of our domestics. It is certainly necessary that we should have authority; for the less reasonable men are, so much the more necessary is it that fear should restrain them; but we must remember that they are our brethren in Jesus Christ, and that we should not use authority until persuasion has failed. Endeavor to make your servants love you, without being familiar with them; do not enter into conversation with them, but speak to them often with sympathy and affection, of their wants; let them be certain of your advice and your compassion; do not reprove them harshly for their faults; do not appear offended or astonished at them, while there is any hope that they can be corrected; speak to them with gentleness and with reason; submit to some neglects of service, in order to convince them that you do not find fault from impatience or temper.

In regard to reading, I should permit a girl to read books of history, and select works of eloquence and poetry, provided her judgment was sufficiently formed to bear the latter. In the education of a young girl, we should consult her condition, and the place where she is to pass her life; do not permit her to indulge hopes above her situation or her fortune; expecting too much

has been the cause of much sorrow. If a girl is to live in the country, her mind should be formed for the pleasures of the country, and she should not be permitted to imbibe a taste for the city. If she is in a middling condition in the city, do not permit her to associate with those of a higher rank than herself. With respect to dress, we must endeavor to inspire girls with moderation. True wisdom consists in our never displaying in our dress, or our equipage, anything remarkable; let there be nothing in their dress like affectation. We must endeavor to inspire them with compassion for the poor; and show them the sin of those who live only for themselves, and refuse to give to those who suffer.

But the most important thing, is to gain the heart of your daughter; seek for her companions who will not injure her; furnish her with amusements that will not disgust her with the serious employments that occupy her the rest of the day. Endeavor to make her love God; do not let her regard him as an inexorable judge, who is watching to censure her; let her learn to think of him as a tender and compassionate Father; do not let her regard prayer as a fatiguing constraint of the mind, but teach her to turn her thoughts inward to find God there. His kingdom is within us. Teach her to confess her faults to God, to represent her wants to

him, and to acquire the habit of acting always as in his presence, and of being animated in the performance of duty by the spirit of love, and to place all her confidence in Him.

LETTERS OF FENELON.

[These letters are numbered merely for convenience; the subjects will enable any one, who wishes to refer to them, to find them in the original.]

FROM THE "SPIRITUAL LETTERS."

LETTER I.

ADVICE TO A MAN OF THE WORLD, WHO DESIRED TO BECOME RELIGIOUS.

I AM greatly pleased at the kindness of heart with which you received the letter I had the honor to write to you. It must be the spirit of God that has given you this thirst for truth and desire of assistance in your great work. I shall be most happy to aid you.

The more you seek for God, the nearer he will be to you; every step that you take towards him will bring you peace and consolation.

Christian perfection, that people have a sort of dread of, from the idea that it imposes gloom and constraint, is not perfection, but inasmuch as it increases benevolence. We do not consider it constraint to do those things which we love

to do. We find a pleasure in sacrificing ourselves to any one that we truly love. Thus, the more we advance in perfection, the more willing are we to follow its Author. What do we desire better than to be always satisfied, and to be as well contented with crosses as with their opposite pleasures? This is a contentment that you will never find in yielding yourself up to your passions, and which will never fail you if you give yourself up to God. It is true that this is not a contentment that flatters and excites like profane pleasures; but it is, nevertheless, genuine contentment, and far superior to what the world can give; for sinners are ever desiring what they cannot obtain. It is a quiet and sober peace, but the soul prefers it to the intoxication of passion. It is a peace in which we are in harmony with ourselves, a peace that is never disturbed but by our own unfaithfulness. As the world cannot give it, it cannot deprive us of it. If you doubt it, try it; "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good."

You will do well to regulate your time, that you may have every day a little leisure for reading, meditation, and prayer, to review your defects, to study your duties, and to hold communion with God. You will be hapy when a true love to Him shall make this duty easy. When we love God, we do not ask what we shall say

to him. We have no difficulty in conversing with a friend. Our hearts are ever open to him. We do not think what we shall say to him, but we say it without reflection. We cannot be reserved. When even we have nothing to say to him, we are satisfied with being with him. Oh! how much better are we sustained by love than by fear. Fear enslaves, constrains, and troubles us; but love persuades, consoles, animates us; possesses our whole souls, and makes us desire goodness for its own sake.

It is true that the fear of the judgments of God is necessary to keep the passions under restraint; but if we must begin by fear that makes the flesh tremble, let us hasten to that love that consoles the spirit. Oh! how kind and faithful a friend will God be to those who enter into a sincere and constant friendship with him!

The most important thing, if you really wish to be a religious man, is to distrust yourself, after so many proofs of your weakness, and to renounce immediately those companions that might lead you from the right path.

If you wish to love God, why should you wish to pass your life in friendship with those who do not love him, and who slight his love? Why are you not satisfied with the society of those who will confirm and strengthen your love for him?

I do not wish that you should break off entirely your connections with all those persons with whom politeness requires you to associate, and still less do I wish you to neglect any of the duties of your station. But I refer to those connections that are voluntary, and that may contaminate the heart, and insensibly weaken our best resolutions; intimacies with the vain and foolish, and the company of those who despise piety and tempt you to a dangerous dissipation. These things are dangerous for the most confirmed in virtue, and of course still more pernicious for those who have taken only the first steps in the right path, from which it is so natural for them to turn aside.

I acknowledge that you ought not to present before the public a scene of ostentatious conversion, which might produce ill-natured remarks. True piety never demands these demonstrations. Two things only are necessary; one is, not to set a bad example, that we may never have to blush for the religion of Jesus; the other is, to do without affectation and without eclat, whatever a sincere love to God demands.

LETTER II.

TO ONE WHO WAS UNDECIDED ABOUT A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

You may think me forward, but I cannot be reserved with you, although I have not the honor of an acquaintance with you. The knowledge that has been communicated to me of the situation of your heart, affects me so deeply, that it leads me to set aside forms.

Your friends, who are also mine, have assured you of the sincerity of my interest in you. I can hardly realize a more perfect joy, than to have you with me for some days.

In the meantime, I cannot avoid saying to you, that we ought to yield ourselves up to God, when he thus invites us to himself. Do we deliberate so long, when the world presents to us the seductions of pleasure and of passion? Have we thus hesitated? Have we resisted evil as we resist good? Is it a question whether we shall be deluded, corrupted, and lost; whether we shall act against the most sacred convictions of the heart and the understanding? In seeking vanities and the pleasures of sense, we are not afraid of going too far. We decide immediately, we yield ourselves up without reserve.

But is it a question whether we shall believe



that an all-wise and all-powerful hand has made us, since we have not made ourselves? Is it a question whether we shall acknowledge that we owe all to him from whom we have received everything, and who has made us for himself? We begin to hesitate, to deliberate, and to find subtile doubts upon the simplest and clearest things; we are even ashamed of being grateful to him, and we dare not let the world see that we are willing to serve him. In a word, we are as timid, as irresolute, and as scrupulous in the cause of virtue, as we are unhesitating, bold, and decided in that of vice.

I ask but one thing of you, which is, to follow in simplicity, the bent of your own mind for goodness, as you have formerly followed your earthly passions in the pursuit of evil.

Whenever you examine the proofs of our religion you will find that no solid arguments can be opposed to it; and that those who contend against it, only do it that they may be free from its restraints. Thus they refuse to obey God, that they may be devoted to self. Is this, in good faith, wise or just? Are so many deliberations necessary to conclude that he has not made us for ourselves, but for him. In serving him, what do we risk?

We shall do, as before, all that is really honest and innocent. We shall have, perhaps, the same

duties to fulfil, and the same sorrow to endure patiently. But we shall have the infinite consolation of loving him, who is the sovereign good. We shall labor and we shall suffer for him, who is our true and perfect friend, and who will recompense us a hundred-fold in this life, even by the peace which he will shed upon our souls. And we shall add to this the anticipation of a life of eternal felicity, compared with which this life is a slow death.

Believe, then, your own heart, to which God, whom it has so long forgotten, is now speaking in love, notwithstanding its ingratitude. Consult the good, those whom you know to be sincere; ask them what is the suffering from serving God; learn from them whether they repent of their choice, if they think they were rash and credulous in their conversion. They have been in the world as you have; ask them if they regret quitting it, and if the drunkenness of Babylon is sweeter than the peace of Zion. No; whatever we may endure in the Christian life, we can never lose that peace of mind, which reconciles us to all we suffer, and makes us cease to desire what we are deprived of.

Does the world bestow as much? You are acquainted with it. Are those who are devoted to it, satisfied with what they have, and not desirous of what they have not? Do they do

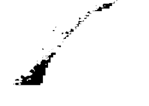
everything from love and from their hearts? What do you fear? To quit what you will leave very soon, and what is leaving you every moment, and what can never fill your heart, that turns away from it with a mortal languor; your heart that contains within itself a melancholy void, a secret reproach of conscience, and a sense of the nothingness of that by which we have been deluded?

"Oh! what do you fear? To find a virtue too pure to imitate, a God too good to love, an attraction in goodness that shall not leave you free to follow earthly vanities? What do you fear? To become too humble, too much detached from self, too pure, too just, too reasonable, too grateful to your Father in heaven? Oh! fear nothing so much as this unjust fear, and this foolish wisdom of the world, which deliberates between God and self, between virtue and vice, between gratitude and ingratitude, between life and death.

All that the most extravagant lovers have said in the delirium of passion, is in one sense true. Not to love is not to live. The wildest passions that have transported mankind, have been only the true love misplaced, and wandering from that centre to which it naturally tends. God has made us for himself. He has kindled a flame in the bottom of our hearts, that should

ever burn like a lamp for Him who lighted it; and all other life is like death. We ought then to love.

But what shall we love? That which we cannot love sincerely, that which is not lovely, that which vanishes as we would grasp it? What shall we love in the world? Men, who are as great hypocrites in honesty as they accuse religious men of being in devotion; an honorable name, that perhaps we cannot keep, and that would not satisfy our hearts if we could; the esteem of ignorant persons, whom we perhaps individually despise? What will you love? This mortal body, which debases your mind, and subjects your heart to the pains of its own diseases and to death? What will you do then? Will you not love anything? Will you live without the soul of existence? Will you not love God, who desires that you should love him and who wishes you to give yourself to him that he may restore you to himself? Do you fear, with this treasure, that you can want anything? Can you think that the infinite Creator cannot fill and satisfy your soul? Distrust yourself and all created beings; they are all nothing, and cannot satisfy the heart of man that was made for the love of God. But never doubt Him who is the sole good, and who mercifully fills your heart with dissatisfaction toward all other




things, that it may be constrained to return to him.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME PERSON.

Although I have not heard from you, I cannot forget you, nor relinquish the privilege you have given me. Suffer me, then, I beg you, to represent to you how culpable you will be, if you resist the truths and the strong feelings that God has awakened in your heart. It would be resisting his Holy Spirit. You cannot doubt the worthlessness of the world, nor its insufficiency to make you happy, nor the illusive nature of its flatteries. You acknowledge the rights of the Creator over the creature; and how much more inexcusable is ingratitude to him than to man. You recognize the truth that there is a God, in the wisdom that shines in all his works, and in the virtues with which he inspires those who love him. What can you oppose to such touching truths? Is it not a real indocility of heart which produces this irresolution? We are afraid of the yoke; this is the true leaven of unbelief. We try to persuade ourselves that we do not believe enough, and

that, being in this state of doubt, we cannot take any steps in a religious life, but with precaution, and as if there were danger of soon retracting. What have you in reality to oppose to the truths of religion? Nothing but a fear of constraint, and of being obliged to lead a serious life; a fear of being led farther than you wish in the road to perfection. It is because you see the sacrifices that it demands, that you are afraid of religion.

But permit me to say that you know not all its delights. You perceive what it deprives you of, but you do not see what it bestows. You exaggerate its sacrifices, without looking at its consolations. It leaves no void in the heart. If it constrain your inclinations, the love with which it will inspire you, will give you a relish for truth and virtue, far superior to all your ill-regulated tastes. What do you expect from it? that it will perform a miracle to convert you? Even a miracle could not take from you this irresolution of self-love that fears a sacrifice. What will you gain by reasoning without end, while your conscience declares the right that God has over you? Arguments will not cure the wound in your heart; you do not reason for the sake of conviction and action, but that you may find doubts, that you may find excuses, and retain your self-love.

You deserve that God should leave you to yourself, as a punishment for so long a resistance. But he loves you more than you know how to love yourself; he follows you with his mercy, he troubles your heart to subdue it: yield yourself to him, and finish this dangerous irresolution. This hesitation between two courses is in fact a choice; it is the secret, lurking desire of the heart in the illusion of self-love, fearing to yield itself up, and ready to fly from the restraints that religion imposes.

Pardon the liberties I take; but I cannot moderate the zeal with which your confidence has inspired me.

LETTER IV.

TO THE DUKE DE CHEVREUSE, ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT IN THE SOUL.

I HAVE given my attention to the difficulty you state, of discriminating between the operations of the Spirit of God and our own natural understanding. We cannot have a precise and certain rule upon this subject within us. We only have an exterior guide for our actions, which is conformity to the precepts, counsels,

and graces of Christianity. If we had, in addition to this, the means of distinguishing with certainty the Divine influence from the operation of our natural powers, we should then be endowed with a sort of sanctity and infallibility, that would amount to inspiration. This is exactly opposed to the uncertainty of faith and to a state of pilgrimage.

We ought not to seek what our present condition does not permit us to obtain; I mean a certain rule to decide when we are moved by a Divine influence, and when it is our nature, which may imitate it.

On the other hand, it is of the utmost importance in our conduct, as a protection against illusion, to discern this difference, and to have a certain rule for judging. We must, it is said, obey the Divine influence; not to do it is to resist God, is to constrain the Holy Spirit, is to turn away from that perfection to which we are called.

But how shall we follow this Divine guide, if we have no certain rule by which to distinguish it from the operations of our own minds? A want of certainty upon this subject leaves us in continual danger of acting contrarily to what we really desire; of being influenced by natural inclination, when we desire to be guided by the Spirit of God. This is the difficulty; let us seek the remedy.

These doubts can never relate, as I have before observed, to those things that are forbidden by the precepts, the commands, the charities of our religion. This holy influence not only can never lead us to violate the direct instructions, but can never teach us to neglect any of the minor duties recommended in the Gospel. Thus we see that there is no question about an entire purity and perfection of manners in the case. The question must be, between two right actions, to know which is the prompting of this inward teacher.

It is true, that in this choice we have no certainty of internal evidence. We have only external rules of Christian prudence to enable us to judge by circumstances, and to decide which is the more expedient. And we have not within us any certain rule to discern whether a decided preference for one right action, over another, is from a divine influence or from our own nature. And it would not suit our condition here to have this certainty; it is the will of God that we shall remain in this uncertainty, and that we shall not be able to distinguish between them. It is necessary, then, that this Divine influence be adapted to our condition, and that it should operate always without our consciousness.

The danger of illusion as to venial acts, is not astonishing in a state in which we are liable to far more perilous mistakes, which lead us to take

the motions of self-love, that are the death of the soul, for its true life. What shall we do in this state of darkness? All that depends upon us to do, and with this be satisfied. Fidelity in duty, united to peaceful trust, in such a state of uncertainty, is the greatest self-sacrifice to those spirits that are eager to understand the ways of God.

It is true, that notwithstanding the obscurity that rests upon this pilgrimage, there are appearances, though without absolute certainty, that serve to cherish in the heart an humble confidence, that the spirit of God guides it. There are gleams of this light in the darkness of the most uncertain faith, making it visible occasionally, that we are led on to perfection by the Divine love. God mingles light and darkness thus, that the soul may not be lost in uncertainty, yet not have a full assurance, and may not find here, in either state, a sufficient support.

The best proof that we are influenced by the Spirit of God, is, first, when the action itself is pure and conformable to the perfection of his laws. Secondly, when we perform it simply, tranquilly, without eagerness to do it, contented if it is necessary to relinquish it. Thirdly, when, after the work is done, we do not seek by unquiet reflections to justify the action even to ourselves, but are willing it should be con-

demned, or to condemn it ourselves, if any superior light discovers it to be wrong; and when, in fine, we do not appropriate the action to ourselves, but refer it to the will of God. Fourthly, when this work leaves the soul in its simplicity, in its peace, in its own uprightness, in humility, and in self-forgetfulness.

All these things, it is true, are very delicate in their operation upon the mind; and all we can say still gives little knowledge of them. But though there is so much obscurity in a state of faith, it is nevertheless true, that God, without teaching us by positive rules how to know his voice, accustoms the mind to understand it, to recognize it, and to obey it, although it cannot give an account, by any philosophical principle or precise rule, how it may be discerned. He gives to the soul when it needs it, a momentary certainty; and then it is withdrawn, leaving no vestige behind. The greatest danger is from interrupting this influence by the inquietude with which we would escape from this state, and insist upon seeing clearly, when we are thus surrounded by darkness.

One thing that it appears to me desirable to observe, is, that we can often more easily distinguish that which is nature, than that which is a Divine influence. Let us relinquish our own peculiar desire, whether they lead us to repose

or to action; those that are induced by a refined intellectual taste, as entirely as those that grow out of the pleasures of sense; and in this peace of the soul, let us, in simplicity and truth, and in the presence of God, do all we can to die to ourselves and to please him.

But we must guard against useless scruples, against a mental constraint, and an anxiety to be assured that we perform all our actions under the influence of the Spirit of God. We may extinguish this light in the endeavor to ascertain that we are following it. We may return, under a pretext of safety, into all the windings of that self-love that we pretend to avoid. We are in danger of losing the reality of this influence in our effort to obtain a certainty with regard to it, which it is not the will of God that we should possess. Thus we might pass our lives in reasoning upon the operation of the Spirit of God, without daring to yield ourselves up to its influence.

Were I to propose anything personal and peculiar to yourself, my good Duke, it would be to remind you that the bent of your mind, and the temptation to illusion in you, arise, not from any gross disorders, but from the intemperance of wisdom and the excess of reasoning. Even wisdom ought to be sober and temperate. Sobriety and simplicity of mind are the same thing.

The practice of true love to God dissipates doubts, and disgusts us with speculative reasonings.

LETTER V.

TO A PERSON IN AFFLICTION.

It is, Madam, but a sad consolation, to say to you that I feel your sorrow. This, however, is all that human weakness can do; and when we would do more we must turn to God. It is to him that I go, the consoler of the afflicted, the protector of the weak. I pray to him, not that he may take away your grief from you, but that he may make it a blessing to you; that he may give you strength to support it, and that he may not let you sink under it. These great sorrows are the remedies for the diseases of our minds. It is through great suffering that the mystery of Christianity is accomplished, I mean the crucifixion of self. It is then that the grace of God is unfolded to us, and that we understand its intimate operation upon us, and that we are taught to sacrifice self. We must turn our thoughts away from ourselves, before we can give them to God; and that we may be constrained to do this, it is necessary that our hearts

be so deeply wounded, that all created things be turned into bitterness to us. Thus touched in the tenderest part, troubled in its sweetest and purest affections, the heart feels that it cannot support itself, and escapes from its weakness and goes to God.

These, Madam, are violent remedies, but sin has made them necessary. This is the true support of the Christian in affliction. God lays his hand upon two beings united in a holy affection. He confers a blessing upon both; he places one in glory, and makes his removal the means of salvation to the one that remains. This is what God has done for you. May his Holy Spirit awaken all your faith, that you may penetrate these truths. I will pray for it continually; and as I have much faith in the prayers of the afflicted, I beg of you to remember me in your prayers. Your charity will teach you what I have need of. and will give earnestness to your petitions.

LETTER VI.

ON THE DEATH OF A PIOUS FRIEND.

God has taken what was his own; has he not done right? It was time that F—— rested from all his sufferings: they were great, and he

thought little of them himself; his only inquiry was concerning the will of Him in whose hands he was. Crosses are of no use to us, but inasmuch as we yield ourselves up to them, and forget ourselves. Forget yourself, then, my friend; otherwise this sorrow will not be a blessing to you. God does not make us suffer for the sake of suffering, but to teach us to forget ourselves in that state, in which this self-forgetfulness is the most difficult, a state of great sorrow.

I feel for the grief of the good Abbé F———. I know how truly they were united, and I have been rejoiced at it. Such a death as this has nothing but joy in it. He is nearer to us than he was before. There is no longer any curtain between us. Even the veil of faith is raised to those whose hearts are full of pure and disinterested love.

LETTER VII.

TO A FRIEND.

[Hearts united by religion meet, although separated by distance.]

I AM always united in heart to you and your dear family; never doubt it. We are near together, though we do not see each other; whilst many people are far apart, though they live in



the same room. God unites all, and annihilates distance to those whose hearts unite in him. He is the common centre, where hearts meet from all parts of the world. I cannot help feeling the privation of not seeing you. But we must submit to this with patience, while it pleases God that it shall be so, even if it should be till death. Content yourself with the performance of your own duties. For the rest, be composed and self-collected, diligent in regulating your own affairs, and patient under domestic trials.

As for Madam ——, I pray God that she may not regard those things that are behind but press forward in the right path. I pray that God may bless all your family, and that they may belong to him.

LETTER VIII.

ON THE DANGERS OF MENTAL DISSIPATION.

No one could be more affected than I was, by the excellent letter that you wrote me. I saw your heart in it, and I approve of it. I pray that God may preserve you amidst the contagion of the age. Your security will be to distrust your quickness and natural activity. You have more than common taste for mental dissipation,



and as soon as you are dissipated you are weakened. As your strength can come only from God, you must not be astonished if you are weak as soon as you turn from him. God supports us only when we trust in him. Ought he not allow us to fall, when we rashly separate ourselves from him? We can only hope for a resource against our weakness in meditation and prayer.

You are peculiarly in want of this support. You have an excitable disposition, that is easily interested; your passions are soon awakened, your vivacity and your natural activity expose you. Besides, you have an open, frank manner, that pleases and prejudices the world in your favor. Nothing is more dangerous than this power of pleasing. Self-love is delighted with it, and the heart is poisoned by it. At first its victims are amused, then flattered, then dissipated; their good resolutions are weakened; and at last they are intoxicated with self and with the world, that is to say, with pleasure and vanity. Then they feel that they are separated from God, and they have no courage to return.

Your only security will lie, in guarding yourself against this dissipation. I implore you to devote a quarter of an hour every morning to reading some religious book, and to meditate

upon it with freedom, simplicity, and affection; and employ a few moments more in the same way in the evening. And occasionally, during the day, recall to your mind the presence of God, and your intention of acting according to his will. Contemplate with humility your faults, and strive in earnest to correct them; be patient with yourself, without flattering your faults, just as you would be with another person; observe the ordinances of your religion. I will pray with my whole heart for you.

LETTER IX.

TO A PERSON LIVING IN SOLITUDE.

I WILL never forsake any one whom God has committed to my care, until I fail in my duty to God himself; therefore do not fear lest I should forget you. But if I were to do so, God would effect by his immediate influence what his unworthy instrument had neglected. "Be not afraid, O thou of little faith." Remain exactly in your usual state. Retain your confidence in N———, who knows the very bottom of your heart, and who alone can give you consolation in your trials. It will be given to him to aid you in your need. No convent will be suitable



for you. Everything would be constraint to you, and would prove a dangerous temptation. Remain free in solitude, and let your heart in simplicity be occupied with God and yourself. Every day is a feast-day to those who endeavor to live only in the will of God. Place no limits to your devotion to him. Never interrupt the operation of his Spirit.

There is a great difference between pain and trouble. Simple pain is a state of purification, trouble, a state of punishment. Pain, if we are not unfaithful, is sweet and tranquil, from the entire acquiescence of the soul in the will of God. But trouble is the rebellion of the heart against him, and an opposition of the will to itself, and the spirit is rent by the division. But pain only purifies the soul; to be willing to suffer, is to be in peace. It is the blessed germ of Paradise in our state of probation. When we resist God, we lose the influence of his Spirit, and in losing this, we depart from peace, and from that experience of him, which is to us what the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day were to the Israelites in the desert.

LETTER X.

TO A MARRIED WOMAN.

The day of St. Francis de Sales is a great feast for me, Madam. You see by his letters and by his life, that he had risen above the world. He received with the same peace, and the same self-forgetfulness, its greatest honors and its severest contradictions. His natural style discovers an amiable simplicity, far above the charms of the spirit of this world. You see a man possessed of a profound penetration, and of exquisite judgment of things, and knowledge of the human heart, seeking only, as a simple man, to comfort, to solace, to enlighten, to perfect his neighbor. No one had a keener sense of the highest perfection, but he brings himself down to the meanest and lowest; he makes himself all things, not that he may please, but that he may gain all; and gain them not for himself, but for Jesus Christ. This is the spirit of the saint that I wish to impart to you. To think of the world, without either contempt or hatred, — this is a life of faith. Be not intoxicated with its flatteries, nor discouraged by its contradictions, but maintain an equal mind between these two states, and walk in the presence of God with a peaceful constancy, looking, in



the various appearances and actions of men, to God alone, who thus sometimes supports our weaknesses by consolations, and sometimes kindly exercises our faith by trials. This is the true life of the children of God.

You will be happy if you can say from the very bottom of your heart, "Wo to the world." Its conversation and its pleasures have yet too much power over you. They do not deserve so much of your attention. The less you desire to please it, the more you will be above it. What is called *spirit*, is only a vain refinement that the world teaches. There is no true spirit, but simple and upright reason; and among the children of Adam, there is no right reason, if it be not purified and corrected by the Spirit of God, that can teach us all truth.

If you wish to be directed by the Spirit of God, listen no longer to the world. Listen not to your own inclinations, for they are of the world. Desire no spirit but the spirit of the Gospel, no refinements but those of the spirit of faith, that is conscious of the slightest imperfection in virtue. In seeking to be perfect in this way, with humility and simplicity, you will be compassionate towards the infirmities of others, and you will have a true refinement of mind, without disgust or contempt for things that appear low, and mean, and in bad taste.

Oh! how really low and vulgar is the refinement in which the world glories, when compared to that which I desire for you with my whole heart.

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

Do not think, Madam, that I am wanting in zeal to do you good. I perceive your upright intentions, and the thirst with which God has inspired you, for all those truths that will prepare you for his service. I should rather die than be wanting in my duty to the souls that are confided to me, and more especially to yours, which is very dear to me in our Lord.

Your piety is too anxious and unquiet. Do not distrust God; if you are sincere, he will not fail you in your need. Either his providence will furnish you with assistance from without, or he will supply you with the power you want within yourself. Believe him faithful in all his promises, and he will reward you according to the measure of your faith. Were you abandoned by all mankind in an inaccessible desert, he would send manna from heaven, he would cause the water to flow from the rocks.

Fear only lest you fail in your duty to him,



and do not fear even this so as to be troubled. Support yourself as you would support your neighbor, without flattering his faults. Be simple with him who dwells with the simple.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

You are right in thinking that it is not enough to change the object of ardent feeling, and that there is an unquiet excitement, which we should moderate even in the service of God, and in the correction of our own defects.

This view should assist you in acquiring calmness, without leading you to relax your efforts. The ardor with which you enter into the best things is an evil; it produces an agitation that becomes still more opposed to the peace of the Spirit of God, so that from a sense of politeness you are induced to control the expression of it. A little simplicity would enable you to practise the virtue with more success and less effort.

With regard to your apparel, it appears to me that you should be guided by the taste of your husband; it is for him to decide upon these little proprieties. If he wishes to practise economy in these things, you ought to retrench as far as may

be agreeable to him. If he desires that you make a certain appearance, do, out of complaisance to him, whatever you think will please him, and yield to him your own taste and judgment.

If he does not regard these things, and leaves you to yourself, a medium is the best. You are fond of extremes; entire magnificence alone can satisfy your refined and lofty taste. A severe simplicity is another refinement of self-love, for we then renounce grandeur in a striking manner. It is mediocrity that is insupportable to pride. There is the appearance of a want of taste, in being dressed like a citizen. I am told that you once dressed like a nun. This was too much in appearance, and too little in reality. A moderate appearance would cost you a greater sacrifice. You can be truly simple, only by keeping a true medium. All extremes, even in right, have in them a refined affectation.

The mediocrity that excites no attention, furnishes no aliment to self-love. It is the love of God only that does not suffer from these severe rules. Your plain duty is, to speak without reserve to your husband, and to do without hesitation whatever you shall see will please him.

LETTER XIII.

WE MUST NOT SUFFER FROM THE FEAR OF THE DEATH OF THOSE WHOM WE LOVE.

I PARTAKE of the grief that you feel at the dangerous illness of N——. The uncertainty which you have endured these two days past, is a severe suffering. Nothing is a greater trial to human nature, than this suspense between a weak hope and a great fear. But we must have faith in our grief. Our sensibility leads us to think that our afflictions will be greater than we can bear, but we know not the strength of our own hearts, nor the power of God. He knows all. He knows every folding of the heart that is the work of his hand, and the extent of the sorrow that he inflicts, and he will proportion the one to the other. Let him do then his pleasure, and let us be willing to suffer. It is cowardice and sensitiveness, that thinks that to be impossible which in truth is not. What we think will overwhelm us entirely, only subdues and conquers our pride, that cannot be too much humbled; and the renewed spirit rises from its subjection with a celestial strength and celestial consolations. Commit your friend to God. What would be the sacrifice? the short and suffering life of a being who must endure pain on earth, and who finds his safety in death. You will see him



again soon, not under this sun that shines upon vanity and affliction of spirit, but in the pure light of eternal truth, which will make the felicity of all those who behold it.

The more pure and excellent your friend is, the more worthy is he of being set free from this world. It is true that there are few sincere friends, and that it is hard to lose them. But we do not lose them; the danger is only for ourselves, lest we should be lost in not following those whom we mourn.

As for your prayers, have no fears; there can be no illusion in encouraging the consciousness of the presence of God, and letting your mind dwell upon his perfection.

While you think only of God and truly love him, and remembering his presence devote yourself to him without presumption, and without neglecting any duty, you will be in no danger; follow then your inclinations.

LETTER XIV.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER, WHICH GOD INSPIRES, AND THE COURAGE OF THE MEN OF THE WORLD.

I AM touched with the sufferings of your sick friend, but I rejoice that he supports them so

well. You are right in making a distinction between willingness to suffer, and courage. Courage is a certain elevation and strength of mind, with which people overcome everything. Those minds that are guided by the spirit of God, and that are conscious of their own weakness, do what is necessary to be done, without being aware of their own strength, and without any assurance of success. They endure and overcome by an inexplicable power, that is within them without their knowing it, that comes to them as occasion requires, as if it were borrowed, and that they do not think of appropriating to themselves. They are not thinking of suffering well, but insensibly they are able to bear every trial to the end, in peace and simplicity, without any other desire, than that the will of God be fulfilled.

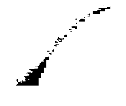
There is nothing brilliant, nothing grand, nothing striking in the eyes of others, and still less in their own eyes, in this. If you tell them that they have suffered nobly, they will not understand you. They do not know themselves how all this comes to pass; they scarcely know what is in their own hearts, and they do not seek to know. If they endeavored to know, they would lose something of their simplicity. This is what we call perfect good will, that makes less show, but is far greater than what is called courage.

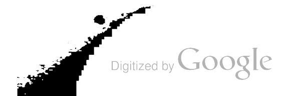
It is like water, the less taste or color it has, the purer it is; and it is its purity that makes it transparent. This good will, which is only a love of the will of God, becomes, upon every occasion, just what it should be, that it may conform itself to him. Happy are those who have the beginning, the seeds within them, of this unspeakable good?

LETTER XV.

UPON BEARING WITH OURSELVES WITH CHARITY; AND ENDEAVORING QUIETLY TO CORRECT OUR FAULTS.

People who love themselves as they love their neighbor, will endure their own failings, as they do their neighbor's, with charity. They will see the defects to be corrected in themselves as they see those of others; and they will manage themselves as they would another, whom they would lead to God. They are patient with themselves, and only insist upon those things that may be accomplished under present circumstances. They are not discouraged because they cannot be perfect in one day. They condemn, without any qualification, the slightest imperfection;—they see it in all its deformity, they endure the consciousness of it in all humility and sorrow,





and they neglect nothing to cure themselves; but they are not fretful in the performance of this duty. They do not listen to those murmurings of their pride and self-love, which would mingle their complaints with the deep but quiet emotions, which the Spirit of God inspires within us for the correction of our faults.

These useless murmurs only serve to discourage the soul, and to occupy it with all the refinements of self-love, and to separate it from God; to lead it to seek for consolations contrary to his will; to weary, distract, and exhaust it; and to prepare for it a sort of disgust and despair of being able to hold on its course.

Nothing retards the progress of the mind more than troubles of this nature, when we voluntarily seek them; but when we only endure them, without producing them by reflections induced by self-love, then they will, like our trials, become sources of virtue, they will be ranked among the other tests of our virtue, which God sees are necessary for our purification; and we must submit to them as we should to a fit of sickness.

Nevertheless, we must pursue our labor within, and our outward acts of duty as far as we are at liberty to do it. Prayer will not be less a privilege in this state, nor less enjoyed; our love will not be less animated and true; the presence of God will not be less distinct nor less consoling,

our duties will not be less faithfully fulfilled. But our constancy is certainly greater when maintained under such painful circumstances. It is a greater force that carries a row-boat against wind and tide a quarter of a league than impels it a whole league when it has them both in its favor.

We must treat these complainings of our self-love, as some people treat the vapors. They take no notice of them, and act as if they did not feel them.

LETTER XVI.

UPON AVOIDING ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE, AND LIVING A LIFE OF FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD.

Do not dwell upon remote events; this anxiety about the future is contrary to a religious state of mind. When God bestows any blessing upon you, look only to him in the comfort that you receive, and take every day of the manna that he sends you, as the Israelites did, without making yourself any provision for the morrow.

A life of faith produces two things. First, it enables us to see God in everything. Secondly, it holds the mind in a state of readiness for whatever may be his will. We must trust to God for whatever depends upon him, and only think

of being faithful ourselves in the performance of our duties. This continual, unceasing dependence, this state of entire peace and acquiescence of the soul in whatever may happen, is the true, silent martyrdom of self. It is so slow, and gradual, and internal, that they who experience it, are hardly conscious of it. When God deprives you of any blessing, he can replace it, either by other instruments, or by himself. The very stones can in his hands become the children of Abraham. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; the morrow will take care of itself. He who has fed you to-day, will take care of you to-morrow.

We shall sooner see the manna fall from heaven in the desert, than the children of God shall want support.

LETTER XVII.

ON THE PROPER CONTEMPLATION OF OUR DEFECTS.

There is a very subtle illusion in your disquietude; for you appear to be occupied with what is due to God and his glory, but at the bottom you are really full of yourself. You wish that God should be glorified, but it is by your own perfection; and by this means, you enter into all the refinement and sinuosities of self-love.

This is merely an ingenious contrivance for thinking of yourself. The true use to be made of all the imperfections, of which you are conscious, is neither to justify nor to condemn them, but to present them before God, conforming your will to his, and remaining in peace; for peace is the divine order, in whatever state we may be.

LETTER XVIII.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS FOUND BY DRAWING NEAR TO GOD AND SUBDUING SELF.

We ought to receive, without any desire to choose for ourselves, whatever God gives us. It is just that his will and not ours should be done, and that without any reserve it should become ours; and then this world would be like heaven. This is a far greater happiness than to see and converse with our friends, or to receive the consolations that they can afford.

How intimately are we united, when we truly meet in the love and presence of God. How well do we speak, when our wills and our thoughts are full of him, who is all in all. Do you then desire true friends? Seek them only at the source of eternal friendships. Do you wish

to hold intercourse with them? Listen in silence to Him who is the word, the life, and the soul of all those who speak the truth and who live in uprightness. You will find in God, not only all that you want, but all that is so imperfectly manifested by those in whom you trust.

You cannot do too much to correct your natural impetuosity and habit of following your love of activity. To be silent, to suffer, to judge no one without actual necessity, and to listen to the voice of God within you,—this will be like a continual prayer and sacrifice of self.

LETTER XIX.

ON THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING BROUGHT NEAR TO DEATH.

It is good for us to approach the gates of death. We become familiar with what we must very soon know. We ought to know ourselves better, when we have come so near to the judgment of God, and the rays of eternal truth. How great, how overwhelming is the thought of God when we are so near to him, when the veil that has hidden him is so near being lifted up! Improve this grace of God towards you, by detaching yourself from the world, and still

more from yourself, for this clinging to others is in truth for the sake of self.

Love God, then, and renounce self in your love for him. Love neither your spirit, nor your courage. Cherish no self-complacency on account of the gifts of God to you, such as disinterestedness, equity, sincerity, generosity. All these are from him; but they may be turned into poison, if they inflate self-love. We must be little in our own eyes, and ever act in this spirit.

LETTER XX.

UPON YIELDING WHAT IS DUE TO OTHERS, AND STILL DEVOTING TIME TO RELIGIOUS MEDITATION.

I PITY you; but we must suffer. We are placed in this world that we may be purified by sacrificing our own inclinations and dying to self. You are called upon for this sacrifice; shrink not from it. I acknowledge that you should not relinquish your rules for the regulation of your time; but you may gain in detail what you use in the mass. You must manage a little. You must proceed with caution, be guided by circumstances, yield in little things; and in those that you think essential, you must exercise all your firmness. But remember that

true firmness is gentle, humble, and tranquil. All violent, haughty, and unquiet firmness is unworthy the cause of religion. When you are led to act with harshness, acknowledge it humbly; but adhere to your principle, and while you confess the fault in your manners, maintain your rule.

With these restrictions you cannot be too complaisant, too kind, too affectionate; there is no book, no prayer, that can improve you so much as this continual self-subjection, provided you make a proper use of it in your hours of retirement, and the dissipations of business do not exhaust the fountain of your affections. In fine, devote as much time as you can to religious meditation, and give the rest of your life to charity, which never faints, which suffers long, and which thinks not of itself.

LETTER XXI

ON CALMLY ENDURING THE IRREGULARITIES OF OTHERS.

A HEATED imagination, violent feelings, hosts of reasons, and volleys of words, effect nothing. The right way is to act as in the presence of God, divested of self, doing according to the light

we have what we are able to do, and satisfied with what success he may grant us. This is a joyful state of self-oblivion, that few persons understand. A word uttered in this simplicity and peace produces a greater effect, even in external affairs, than all the most violent and eager efforts. As it is the Spirit of God that speaks, it speaks with his power and authority; it enlightens, it persuades, it touches, it edifies. We seem to have said nothing, but we have done everything. On the contrary, when we are guided by our own natural impulses, we think we cannot say enough. We make a thousand vain and superfluous reflections; we are always afraid that we shall not do or say enough. We are excited, we exhaust ourselves, we grow angry, we depart from the object, and no good is done.

Your temperament requires many of these lessons. Let the waters flow on in their course. Let men be men; that is to say, be vain, inconstant, unjust, false, and presumptuous. Let the world be the world; you cannot help it. Let each one follow his own bent, and his own ways; you cannot form him over again. It is wiser to leave men to themselves, and to endure them. Accustom yourself to unreasonableness and unjustice. Remain at peace in the presence of God, who knows all your trials and

permits them. Be satisfied with doing with calmness, what depends upon yourself, and let the rest be as if it were not.

LETTER XXII.

UPON SUFFERING ILL-TREATMENT WITH HUMILITY AND IN SILENCE.

I AM touched, as I ought to be, with all your sorrows; but I can only pity you, and pray God to console you. You greatly need his Spirit to support you in your trial, and to temper your natural excitability on an occasion so calculated to awaken it. When God would teach us to die to ourselves, he touches us in the tenderest part; our weakness is the measure of our trial. Be humble. Silence and peace, in a state of humiliation, are the true health of the soul. We are tempted to speak humbly, and we find a thousand excuses for it; it is still better to be silent, for the humility that speaks may be suspected. Self-love consoles itself a little by speaking.

Do not be vexed at what people say. Let them speak, while you endeavor to do the will of God. You will never succeed in pleasing men, and it would not be worth the trouble if

you could. A little silence, peace, and communion with God, will compensate you for all the injustice of men. We must love our fellow-beings, without depending upon their friendship. They leave us, they return, and they go from us again. Let them go or come, it is the feather blown about by the wind. Fix your attention upon God alone, in your connection with them. It is he alone, who through them consoles or afflicts you.

All your firmness is required in the situation in which you are placed; but your impetuosity must meet with trials and obstacles. Possess your soul in patience. Renew often within you the feeling of the presence of God, that you may learn moderation. There is nothing truly great, but lowliness, charity, fear of ourselves, and detachment from the dominion of sense.

LETTER XXIII.

UPON CARRYING THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER INTO ALL OUR ACTIONS.

Do not be discouraged at your faults; bear with yourself in correcting them, as you would with your neighbor. Lay aside this ardor of mind, which exhausts your body, and leads you

to commit errors. Accustom yourself gradually to carry prayer into your daily occupations. Speak, move, act in peace, as if you were in prayer. In truth, this is prayer.

Do everything without eagerness, as if by the Spirit of God. As soon as you perceive your natural impetuosity impelling you, retire into the sanctuary, where dwells the Father of Spirits; listen to what you there hear; and then neither say nor do anything but what he dictates in your heart.

You will find that you will become more tranquil; that your words will be fewer and more to the purpose, and that with less effort you will accomplish more good. I do not recommend here a perpetual struggle of the understanding after something impracticable, but a habit of quietness and peace, in which you may take counsel of God with regard to duty. This you will find a simpler and shorter consultation than the eager and tumultuous debates which you usually hold with self, when you yield to your natural impetuosity.

When the heart is fixed on God, it can easily accustom itself to suspend the natural movements of ardent feeling, and to wait for the favorable moment when the voice within may speak. This is the continual sacrifice of self and the life of faith. This death of self is a

blessed life; for the grace that brings peace succeeds to the passions that produce trouble. Endeavor to acquire a habit of looking to this light within you; then all your life will gradually become a prayer. You may suffer, but you will find peace in suffering.

LETTER XXIV.

UPON OUR DUTY IN A STATE OF PEACE AND HAPPINESS.

I AM rejoiced that you are so pleased with your retreat, and that God gives you so much peace within and without. I pray that he who has commenced this good work, may finish it. It is for you to profit by it. You must improve this time of peace by reflection. You must send up from your heart that continual Amen, and that unceasing Halleluiah, which resound through the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a perfect acquiescence in the will of God, and a sacrifice without any reserve of our will to his.

We must at the same time listen to the voice of God, with our hearts free from all flattering partialities of self-love, and faithfully receive and attend to this light when it shows us our faults, and correct them. What it points out as wrong, we must relinquish, however great be the sacri-

fice. When we thus yield ourselves up to the spirit of God with a perfect renunciation of self, we discover imperfections in our best works, and find within us an inexhaustible fund of faults before imperceptible. Then we say that God alone is good. We strive to correct ourselves in a quiet and simple manner; but our efforts are continual, equal, efficacious, and deep and earnest in proportion as the heart is fixed and undivided.

While all our trust is in help from God, we do not relax our own exertions. We know that he will never fail us, and that it is only we that are unfaithful to him. We condemn ourselves without being discouraged, and we correct our faults while we retain our strength.

LETTER XXV.

THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR FAULTS, AND THE DIFFICULTY OF CURING THEM, SHOULD TEACH US HUMILITY.

I ACKNOWLEDGE that I am glad to see you oppressed with a sense of your defects and your inability to correct them. This despair of nature, that leads us to trust only in God, is what he himself wills. It is then that he gives us the aid that we need.



It is true that you have a hasty and severe disposition, and a fretful character, that is too sensitive to the faults of others, and that renders it difficult to efface impressions which you receive. But it is not your natural temperament that God condemns; for this you have not chosen, and are not able to change. It may be the means of your salvation, if you bear it rightly as a trial. But what God requires of you, is, that you actually perform those duties for which his grace gives you ability. What is required, is, if you cannot be gentle in your exterior, to be humble in your heart; to restrain your natural haughtiness as soon as you perceive it; to repair the evil you have done, by your humility. The duty you are called to practise, is a real, genuine lowliness of heart upon all occasions, a sincere renunciation of self.

It is not surprising that the high opinion entertained by many persons of your decisions for so many years, has insensibly encouraged in you a secret confidence in yourself, and a *hauteur* of which you are not aware. The hasty expressions into which your temper sometimes betrays you, may perhaps, reveal to you the haughtiness that, without this natural frankness, you would not discover. But the source of the evil is within it is this high opinion of yourself, that has lain hidden so long under some specious name. Be

then as humble in the contemplation of your own defects as you have been elevated by your office in judging the defects of others. Accustom yourself to see others neglect your opinion, and give up judging them. At least, if you say anything, let it be said in simplicity, not to decide or correct, but merely to propose a question and to seek for information.

In a word, the object is to place yourself upon a level with the lowest and most imperfect; to encourage in them a freedom, which must make it easy for them to open their hearts to you. If you have anything to bestow upon them, let it be consolation and support rather than correction.

LETTER XXVI.

WE MUST ENDURE THE FAULTS OF OTHERS, AND BE WILLING OURSELVES TO RECEIVE BLAME.

It appears to me that your heart wants enlargement with regard to the faults of others. I grant that you cannot help seeing them when they are presented to your notice, and cannot avoid the opinions produced in your mind by the principles on which some people apparently proceed. You cannot even avoid a degree of pain which these things must occasion. It is

enough if you are willing to bear with some faults; form no judgment in doubtful cases, and do not cherish that degree of pain that would separate you from those who are imperfect. Perfection easily supports the imperfections of others. It makes itself all things to all. We must familiarize ourselves to the greatest defects of good men, and quietly leave them till the time when God shall indicate the moment for undertaking their cure; otherwise we may destroy the good grain with the chaff.

Such persons must strive according to their strength for their own improvement, and we must bear with their weaknesses. You ought to remember, from your own experience, how bitter is this correction; and this should lead you to soften it to others. I ask of you with more earnestness than ever, that you will not spare me with regard to my faults. If your opinion of my defects gives me pain, this sensibility will prove that you have touched me in a tender part. Thus you will have done me a great good, in exercising my humility, and accustoming me to be blamed. I ought to be more lowly in my mind, as I am more elevated from my situation, and as God demands of me a greater sacrifice of myself. I stand in need of this simplicity, and I hope it will strengthen the union between us.

LETTER XXVII.

UPON THE CIRCUMSPECTION THAT IS NECESSARY IN CORRECTING OTHERS, AND IN JUDGING OF WHAT IS WRONG.

WHILE we are so imperfect, we can understand only in part. The same self-love that causes our defects, injuriously hides them from ourselves and from others. Self-love cannot bear the view of itself. It finds some hiding-place, it places itself in some flattering light to soften its ugliness. Thus there is always some illusion in us, while we are so imperfect and have so much love of ourselves

Self-love must be uprooted, and the love of God take its place in our hearts, before we can see ourselves as we are. Then the same principle that enables us to see our imperfections will destroy them. When the light of truth has risen within us, then we see clearly what is there. Then we love ourselves without partiality, without flattery, as we love our neighbor. In the mean time, God spares us, by discovering our weakness to us, just in proportion as our strength to support the view of it increases. We discover our imperfections one by one, as we are able to cure them. Without this merciful preparation, that adapts our strength to the light within, we should be in despair.

They who correct others ought to watch the moment when God touches their hearts; we must bear a fault with patience, till we perceive his Spirit reproaching them within. We must imitate him who gently reproves, so that they feel that it is less God than their own hearts, that condemns them. When we blame with impatience because we are displeased with the fault, it is a human censure, and not the disapprobation of God. It is a sensitive self-love that cannot forgive the self-love of others. The more self-love we have, the more severe our censures. There is nothing so vexatious as the collisions between one excessive self-love, and another still more violent and sensitive. The passions of others are infinitely ridiculous to those who are under the dominion of their own. The ways of God are very different. He is ever full of kindness for us, he gives us strength, he regards us with pity and condescension, he remembers our weakness, he waits for us. The less we love ourselves, the more considerate we are of others. We wait even years to give salutary advice. We wait for Providence to give the occasion, and grace to open their hearts to receive it. If you would gather the fruit before its time, you lose it entirely.

Our imperfect friends can know us only imperfectly; the same self-love that hides their



defects, magnifies ours. They see in us what we cannot see, and they are acquainted with what we ourselves know. They are quick to discover what is disagreeable to them, but they do not perceive the defects that lie deep within, and that sully our virtues and displease God alone. Thus their best judgments are superficial.

My conclusion is, that we must listen to the voice of God in the silence of our souls, and pronounce for or against ourselves, whatever this pure light may reveal to us at the moment when we thus endeavor to know ourselves. We must often silently listen to this teacher within, who will make known all truth to us, and who, if we are faithful in attending to him, will often lead us to silence. When we hear this secret small voice within, which is the soul of our soul, it is a proof that self is silent, that it may listen to it. This voice is not a stranger there. God is in our souls, as our souls are in our bodies. It is something that we cannot distinguish exactly, but it is what upholds and guides us. This is not a miraculous inspiration, which exposes us to illusion and fanaticism. It is only a profound peace of the soul, that yields itself up to the Spirit of God, believing his revealed word, and practising his commands as declared in the Gospel.

LETTER XXVIII.

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION.

I THINK much of you and your sufferings. God will send his consolations into the depths of your soul. The wound is terrible, but his hand is all-powerful to heal. It is only the senses and the imagination that have lost their object. He whom we do not see, is more truly with us than he ever was. We shall meet him in our common centre. Although I have not seen him for many years, yet I have felt as if I conversed with him; I have opened my heart to him, and believed that we have met in the presence of God; and although I have wept bitterly at his death, I cannot think that I have lost him. O! the reality of this intimate and invisible communion which the children of God enjoy!

I am anxious about your health; when the heart is sick, the whole body suffers. I fear lest every object should awaken your grief. We must enter into the designs of God, and try to receive the comforts that he bestows. We shall soon find him whom we seem to have lost; we approach him with rapid strides. Yet a little while, and we shall shed no more tears. We shall die ourselves. Him whom we love lives.



and will never die. This is what we believe: if we believe it rightly, we shall feel in respect to our friends as Jesus Christ wished that his disciples should feel with regard to him when he rose to heaven. "If you loved me," said he "you would rejoice" in my glory. But we weep for ourselves. For a true friend of God, who has been faithful and humble, we can only rejoice at his happiness, and at the blessing that he has left upon those who belonged to him on earth. Let your grief, then, be soothed by the hand of Him who has afflicted you.

LETTER XXIX.

ON THE EFFECTS OF EFFEMINACY, AND RULES OF CONDUCT BY WHICH IT MAY BE OVERCOME.

Your greatest danger is from effeminacy and love of pleasure. These two defects may put the soul in dreadful disorder, even where it has resolved to practise virtue, and feels a great horror of vice. Effeminacy is a languor of the mind, that paralyzes and destroys its better life; it hides within it a treacherous flame, that evil passions are ever ready to kindle, and that will consume all before it.

We must cherish, then, a manly, vigorous

faith, that, without even listening to this weakness, can conquer it. As soon as we listen to, or make any terms with it, we are lost. It injures us as much in our connection with the world as with God. An effeminate man devoted to amusements, will ever be a poor man, and if he ever gets into an important place, he will dishonor it. Such a one is not a man, he is half a woman. A love of ease will lead him away from his true interest. He can neither cultivate his talents, nor acquire the knowledge necessary for his profession, nor submit to the labor of a difficult office, nor endure the constraint that is necessary to please others, nor can he apply himself courageously to the correction of his faults.

What shall such a man do? He is good for nothing; he is incapable of any good thing, but he may fall into great evils. Pleasure will betray him. It is not for nothing that the senses are flattered. After appearing indolent and insensible, they will become furious and ungovernable; and this consuming fire will not be perceived, till it can no longer be quelled.

Even your religious sentiments, if they are mingled with this effeminate spirit, while they may lead you to a life of seriousness and exterior decency will have nothing real in them. You think much of relinquishing the follies of youth;

religion is only a pretext for abandoning them The truth is, that they are irksome to you. You have lost your relish for them, and it is a matter of taste with you, to lead a serious and sober life; but this seriousness, I fear, is as vacant and as dangerous as the folly and gayety of pleasure. A serious sensualist, whose passions reign amidst gloom and retirement, leads an obscure, cowardly, and corrupt life, at which the world, earthly-minded as it is, shudders with horror. You may quit the world, not for God, but to be devoted to your passions; or at least for a life of indolence, which is offensive to God, and which in the eyes of men is more contemptible than the more depraved passions. You may relinquish great objects, to be absorbed with toys and amusements, so trifling that any but children should blush to regard them.

Again, I repeat to you what I said at first, effeminacy enervates and contaminates all who yield to it. It takes from every virtue, and from every power of the soul, its strength and marrow, even in the opinion of the world. Its victims are weak and inefficient in everything. God rejects them, the world spurns them. Such a man is a nonentity, he is as if he were not. He is not a man. Fear this defect, which will be the source of many others. Pray, watch against yourself. Rouse yourself as you would

rouse a man in a lethargy. Make your friends stimulate you and awaken you from sleep. Have recourse to the ordinances of religion. Do not forget that, in this instance, the rewards of the world and of heaven are to be won in the same way. Both of these kingdoms are to be taken by violence.

LETTER XXX.

ADVICE RELATIVE TO EXTERNAL CONDUCT AND TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR MINDS.

I AM not astonished at the disgust you feel at seeing so much that is opposed to the will of God; it is the natural effect of your change of heart. You now enjoy a certain calm in which you may be entirely occupied with what is so interesting to you, and be freed from all that would again open the wounds of your heart. But this is not the will of God. Bear this cross then in peace, as an expiation of your offences, and wait till he shall liberate you from it. He will do it in his own time, and not in yours.

In the meantime, set apart certain hours to think of God and your relation to him. You must read, pray, distrust your inclinations and habits; remember that you carry the gift of God in an earthen vessel; and above all, let your

soul be nourished with the love of God. However you may have departed from him, do not fear to return to him with an humble and child-like love. Speak to him in your prayers of all your wretchedness, of all your wants, of all your sufferings; speak even of the disrelish you sometimes feel for his service. You cannot speak too freely nor with too much confidence. He loves the simple and the lowly; it is with them that he converses. If you are of this number, open your whole heart, and say all to him. After you have thus spoken to God, be silent and listen to him. Let your heart be in such a state of preparation, that his Spirit may impress upon you such virtues as will please him. Let all within you listen to him. This silence of all outward and earthly affections, and of human thoughts within us, is essential, if we would hear this voice, that calls upon us to deny ourselves and to worship God in spirit and in truth.

You have great helps in the knowledge you have acquired; you have read many good books, you are acquainted with the true foundations of religion, and with the weakness of all that is opposed to it. But all these means, which might conduct you to God, will finally arrest your progress, if you value too highly your own wisdom.

The best and highest use of your mind, is to learn to distrust yourself, to renounce your own will, and to submit to the will of God, to become as a little child. It is not of doing difficult things that I speak, but of performing the most common actions with your heart fixed on God, and as one who is accomplishing the end of his being. You will act as others do, except that you will never sin. You will be a faithful friend, polite, attentive, complaisant, and cheerful, at those times when it is becoming in a true Christian to be so. You will be moderate at table, moderate in speaking, moderate in expense, moderate in judging, moderate in your diversions; temperate even in your wisdom and foresight. It is this universal sobriety in the use of the best things, that is taught us by the true love of God. We are neither austere, nor fretful, nor scrupulous, but have within ourselves a principle of love that enlarges the heart, and sheds a gentle influence upon everything; that, without constraint or effort, inspires a delicate apprehension, lest we should displease God; and that arrests us if we are tempted to do wrong.

In this state we suffer, as other people do, from fatigue, embarrassments, misfortunes, bodily infirmities, trials from ourselves, and trials from others, temptations, disgusts, and sometimes dis-



couragements. But if our crosses are the same with those of the rest of the world, our motives for supporting them are very different. We have learnt from Jesus Christ how to endure. This can purify, this can detach us from self, and renew the spirit of our minds. We see God in everything, but we have the clearest vision of him in suffering and in humiliation.

Live, my friend, without any exterior change, but what may be necessary, either that you may avoid evil, or may be protected against your weakness, or that you may not discredit the Gospel. Beyond this, let not your left hand know what your right hand doth; endeavor to be cheerful and tranquil.

Regulate your expenses and your business. Be honorable and modest, simple and free. Serve your country from duty, not from ambition or vain hopes. This will be serving your country, your king, and the King of kings, before whom all visible glories are but shadows.

Let your conduct be single, moderate, and without affectation of either good or evil, but be really firm in the cause of virtue, and so decided that no one can hope to lead you astray. When it is evident that you are devoted in good faith to the cause of religion, no one will make the attempt to turn you from your course.

Put your trust, not in your resolutions, or



your own strength, but in the goodness of God, who has loved you when you thought not of him, and before you could love him.

LETTER XXXI.

CONSOLATION UPON THE DEATH OF A SON.

Your grief is present to me. I cannot forget the great loss you have met with; but God has taken what was his own, and not ours. Who shall say to him, What doest thou? You are far from saying it. His good pleasure is the supreme reason. Besides amidst the most severe sorrows, we can see his paternal hand, and a secret design of mercy.

In another life we shall see and understand the wonders of his goodness that have escaped us in this, and we shall rejoice at what has made us weep on earth. Alas! in our present darkness, we cannot see either our true good or evil. If God were to gratify our desires, it would be our ruin. He saves us by breaking the ties that bind us to earth. We complain because God loves us better than we know how to love ourselves. We weep because he has taken those whom we love away from temptation and

sin. We would possess all that delights and flatters our self-love, though it might lead us to forget that we are exiles in a strange land. God takes the poisonous cup from our hands, and we weep as a child weeps when its mother takes away the shining weapon, with which it would pierce its own breast.

Your son succeeded in the world; it is this success that makes you weep, but it was this that, in the counsels of the Almighty, perhaps, was the cause of his removal, in mercy both to him and to his friends. We must be silent and adore. Prayer alone can console you; it is only in prayer that we are truly in the presence of God.

As soon as we are with God in faith and in love, we are in prayer. And the most holy occupation that does not bring us in this way into his presence, may be a study, but is not prayer. God is our only consoler. Remain in silence in his presence; he will comfort you. We shall find all that we have lost in him. Happy they who desire no other consolation. This is pure and inexhaustible.

LETTER XXXII.

UPON THE NECESSITY OF JOINING FREEDOM TO EXACTNESS.

It appears to me that great freedom and great exactness should be united. Exactness makes us faithful, and freedom makes us courageous. If you are very strict without being free, you will become servile and scrupulous. If you are free without being strict, you will become negligent and careless. Those who have little experience of the ways of God, think they cannot unite these two virtues. They understand, by *being exact*, living in constraint, in sorrow, in a timid and scrupulous unquietness that destroys the repose of the soul; that finds sin in everything, and is so narrow-minded that it questions about the merest trifles, and dares hardly to breathe. They define *being free*, having an easy conscience, not regarding small things; being contented with avoiding great faults, and not considering any but gross crimes as faults; and with the exception of these, allowing whatever flatters self-love, and any license to the passions that does not produce what they call great evil.

It was not thus that Saint Paul understood things, when he said to those whom he endeavored to make Christians, Be free, but with the



liberty that Jesus Christ has given you; be free, for the Saviour has called you to liberty, but let not this liberty be an occasion or pretext for evil.

It appears to me that true fidelity consists in obeying God in everything, and following the light that points out our duty, and his Spirit that prompts us to do it; having the desire to please him, without debating about great or little sins, about imperfections or unfaithfulness; for though there may be a difference in fact, to the soul that is determined to do *all* his will, there is none. It is in this sense that the Apostle says, The law is not for the upright; the law constrains, menaces, if I may so speak, tyrannizes over us, enslaves us. But there is a superior law that raises us above all this, and introduces us into the true liberty of the children of God. It is this; that we ever desire to do all that we can to please our Father in heaven, according to the excellent instruction of St. Augustin, Love God, and then do all you wish.

To this sincere desire to do the will of God, we must add a cheerful spirit, that is not overcome when it has failed, but begins again and again to do better; hoping always to the very end to be able to do it; bearing with its own involuntary weakness as God bears with it; waiting with patience for the moment when it shall be delivered from it; going straight on in

singleness of heart, according to the strength that it can command; losing no time by looking back, nor making useless reflections upon its falls, which can only embarrass and retard its progress. The first sight of our little failings should humble us: but then we must press on, not judging ourselves with a Judaical rigor, not regarding God as a spy, watching for our least offence, or as an enemy who places snares in our path, but as a Father who loves and wishes to save us; trusting in his goodness, invoking his blessing, and doubting all other support; this is true liberty.

I advise you to aspire after it. Fidelity and freedom should go hand in hand; but I fear with you there is more danger of your wanting confidence in God, and openness of heart to him. I do not hesitate to advise you to yield yourself up entirely to that grace, with which he calls you to himself.

LETTER XXXIII.

UPON SUBMISSION TO OCCASIONAL INDIFFERENCE AND DISRELISH FOR RELIGION.

I AM not astonished at this lukewarmness in you. We cannot always be in raptures. It is good for us, by these occasional inequalities, to

learn that it is a gift of God. If we were always in rapture, we should be insensible to suffering, and to our own weakness; temptations would no longer be real temptations to us. We must be tried by this rebellion of our hearts, that thus our love of God may be purified. We are never more faithful than when we cling to our Creator, not by the joy of our hearts, but in the entire choice and acquiescence of our wills. Outward sufferings would not be really painful, if we were exempt from those within.

Submit to your indifference, then, with patience; it will be more useful to you than enjoyment that is accompanied with confidence in yourself. This trial, provided your will is faithful, is useful; it may be a great good to you; it may teach you humility and distrust of yourself; it may, by making you conscious of your weakness, lead you to put your whole trust in God. This sensible pleasure that you desire, is neither the love of God nor the spirit of prayer.

Enjoy this pleasure when God bestows it, and when he does not grant it, still love him, and pray to him, as if you felt it. God would prove you by the privation of this immediate pleasure in religion; you must enter into his designs of mercy towards you, and humbly submit to it. It will serve to destroy your self-love, and this is the will of God.



Your sufferings spring altogether from yourself; they are your own creation. It is a sensitiveness of self-love, that you cherish in the bottom of your heart; instead of performing your duties and helping others to support their burdens, and consoling those whom God has committed to your charge, you are ever recurring to self, and thinking of your own discouragements.

Hope in God; he will support you and enable you to be useful to others, if you trust in him and not neglect your duty.

LETTER XXXIV.

UPON TURNING THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS TO ADVANTAGE.

I WAS quite grieved yesterday to see your mind so much disordered. It appears to me, that there are two things you ought to do. One is, never voluntarily to yield to your self-love; the other, never to be discouraged at discovering in your heart these unreasonable discontents. Would you do well? Pray God to make you patient with others and with yourself.

If you had only the defects of others to bear with, if you found weakness only in them, you



would be strongly tempted to think yourself superior to your neighbor. God compels you, by a continual experience of your own defects, to acknowledge how just it is that you should bear with gentleness the faults of others.

Turn these weaknesses to your advantage, by submitting to them, and ingenuously confessing them, and accustoming yourself not to depend upon your own strength. The Spirit of God will aid you in the correction of your faults. Be patient with yourself, be humble, resign yourself to your own imperfections, not neglecting to cure them, but drawing from them a lesson of self-distrust, as we draw the most powerful remedies even from poisons. God makes you feel your weaknesses, that you may put your trust in him. He will gradually deliver you from them. Happy indeed will be this deliverance!

LETTER XXXV.

UPON THE CAUSES OF TRUE DISCRETION, AND THE CONTRARY DEFECTS.

WITH regard to discretion, I do not wish you to labor to acquire it by continual efforts and reflections upon your own conduct; this would

produce too much constraint; it is better to be silent, and find discretion in simplicity. We ought not, however, to be so silent, as to be deficient in frankness and complaisance in our moments of relaxation and amusement; but then we may speak of indifferent things, and suppress whatever may do harm.

In our recreations, we ought to have a sort of joyousness, that will induce us to please others, and be pleased with trifles. You will become prudent, when you yield yourself to the Spirit of God. He is the source of true prudence; ours gives us only a false dignity, a dazzling appearance, a factitious power. When we are truly simple, and humble, and stripped of our own wisdom, we are clothed with that of God, which cannot do wrong.

It is not the childlike simplicity of the Christian which produces our daily indiscretions; on the contrary, we commit more faults, because we are thinking so much of our own wisdom, and are afraid to give ourselves up to the guidance of the Spirit of God. This spirit would lead us to speak or be silent, according to the call of the moment, without making any unquiet reflections upon ourselves, or having that great desire to succeed, that spoils the best things.



LETTER XXXVI.

UPON THE ARTIFICES OF A REFINED SELF-LOVE.

I COMMIT you to God, and I wish that you would commit yourself to him. You hope for repose elsewhere than in God. You shut your heart to him, and you try to repulse his merciful hand. "Who is it that has resisted God, and been at peace?" Return to him; give yourself up to him; hasten to him. Every moment of delay is a new infidelity. My heart is stricken for you; I hoped to find real consolation in you.

Oh! my dear daughter, be subdued by his spirit. Allow me to place before you, what it seems to me it is his will that I should present to your view. From your earliest infancy you have unconsciously cherished in your heart an immoderate self-love under the disguise of delicacy, and a taste for romance, of which no one has shown you the illusion. You display it in the world, and you manifest it in your most pious actions.

I perceive in you always a taste for what you call *esprit*, for what you think graceful, and for little refinements, that alarms me. This habit will make you find annoyances in every situation. With a mind really upright and powerful, this will render you inferior to many who have

less mind than yourself. You give good advice to others, but you are overcome by the veriest trifle yourself. Everything troubles you. You are in continual fear of committing a fault, or you are vexed that you have been guilty of one. You magnify faults by your lively imagination, and there is always some nothing that reduces you to despair. In one person you see nothing but defects, while in another you imagine perfections of which they have not even the shadow. Your refinement and generosity on one side, and your jealousness and distrusts on the other, are without measure or reason.

You are willing to give yourself up to others, but this makes you an idol to yourself and to them. Here is the origin of this refined idolatry of self, that God would overthrow in your heart. The operation is violent, but necessary. Go to the end of the world for consolation to your self-love, and you will only find the disease increase. You must either offer it up as a sacrifice to God, or you must be continually supplying it with new aliment. If you had no one to minister to your self-love, you would seek, under some pretext or other, for some one who would, and you would at last descend to the meanest and vilest subjects to gratify its cravings. There is only one remedy for you, and it is the very one from which you fly. The sufferings that you com-

plain of spring from yourself. You repulse the hand of God; you listen only to your self-love; you bear this venom in your heart; go where you will, you cannot escape God's displeasure.

Yield yourself up to him, learn to see yourself as you are, vain and ambitious of the admiration of others; seeking to become their idol to gratify your own idolatry of self; jealous and suspicious beyond measure, and fast sinking into an abyss. You must make yourself familiar with these dreadful thoughts; it is only in this way that you can dissolve the charm that enslaves you. You may drive away thought for a time; you may cherish a vain and deceitful strength, such as a fever gives to a sick man, but it is still delirium.

There is no peace except in the destruction of our self-love. You may make some convulsive movements of strength and gayety, but it is agony that prompts them. If you would make the same effort for the peace of God, as you make against it, how unspeakable would be your happiness. I will pray God, to give you strength to subdue yourself; I will pray him to take pity upon your weakness, and to do you good in spite of your resistance to him. For myself, I will not forsake you.

LETTER XXXVII.

WE MUST NOT BE DISCOURAGED AT THE IMPERFECTIONS OF OUR FELLOW CREATURES.

I AM very sorry for the imperfections you find in human beings; but we must learn to expect but little from them; this is the only security against disappointment. We must receive from them what they are able to give us, as from trees the fruits that they yield. God bears with imperfect beings, even when they resist his goodness. We ought to imitate this merciful patience and endurance. It is only imperfection that complains of what is imperfect. The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become towards the defects of others.

Do not attend to those, who, under the dominion of prejudice, erect themselves into a tribunal of justice. If anything can cure them, it is to leave them to themselves, and go on in your own path, with the simplicity and meekness of a child.

LETTER XXXVIII.

OUR EFFORTS FOR OURSELVES SHOULD BE WITHIN, AND NOT IN EXTERNALS.

You are virtuous. You wish to be still more so, and you expend much effort on the details. But I fear you attend a little too much to externals. Think less of outward things, and more of those within. Be willing to sacrifice to God the most powerful affections; your natural haughtiness, your worldly wisdom, your taste for show in your house; your fear of losing the consideration of the world; your severity against what is irregular.

Your temper is what I am least concerned about. You are aware of it, you fear it. Notwithstanding your resolutions, it overcomes you, and this teaches you humility, and will help you to correct more dangerous faults.

Place your greatest dependence upon prayer; merely human strength and attention to precise forms will never cure you. But accustom yourself from a consideration of your own incurable weaknesses, to view those of others with charity and compassion. Prayer will soften your heart, and render you gentle, docile, accessible, and accommodating. Could you bear that God

should be as strict with you as you are with your neighbor?

We are very severe about externals, and do not look within. While we are scrupulous about a superficial display of virtue, we do not regard the coldness of our secret hearts towards God. We fear him more than we love him. We would pay our duty to him with actions, and think we have settled our account with him, instead of giving him, without any calculation, all our love. If we looked carefully into ourselves, we should find some secret place where we hide what we think we are not obliged to sacrifice to God. We try not to see it, lest we should reproach ourselves for retaining it. We guard it as we would the apple of the eye. If any one should force this entrenchment, he would touch us to the quick, and we should be inexhaustible in reasons to justify our attachment. The more we dread to renounce it, the more reason there is for believing that this is our duty. Our thoughts hover around ourselves, and we cannot forget ourselves in God. Whence comes it that the vessel does not sail? Is it that there is no wind? No, the breath of heaven never fails, but the vessel is held fast by anchors that we do not perceive; they are at the bottom of the deep.

The fault is our own, and not our Creator's.



We have only to seek for them, and we shall find these hidden chains that bind us and arrest our progress; and there, where we the least suspect, is the place where we should feel the most distrust.

Let us make no bargain with God, as if we feared our service to him should cost us too much. Do not let us be satisfied with prayer morning and evening, but let the whole day be one continual prayer.

LETTER XXXIX.

UPON THE DEATH OF THE ABBE DE LANGERON, HIS EARLIEST AND MOST FAITHFUL FRIEND.

I HAVE not the strength that you impute to me. I have felt my irreparable loss with a despondency, that proves that my heart is very weak. Now I am more calm, and all that remains is a sort of bitterness and languor of soul. But this humbles me as much as my more violent grief. All that I have felt in both these states, was self-love. I acknowledge that I have wept for myself, in mourning for a friend who made the delight of my life, and whose loss I feel continually. I find an elevation in the lassitude of grief, and my imagination, that was



excited by a blow so unexpected, has become accustomed to the thought, and is now calm.

But, alas! everything is vain, except an entire yielding up of our hearts to the Spirit of God. As for our friend, his death was so calm and peaceful, that it would have made you happy to witness it. Even when he was delirious, his thoughts were all on God. I never witnessed anything more edifying or lovely. I relate this to you, because I ought not to speak of my great suffering, without also acknowledging this joy of faith of which St. Augustin speaks, and which God has granted me upon this occasion. He has done his will, he has preferred the happiness of my friend to my comfort. I should be wanting in my love to God, and to my friend, if I did not acquiesce in his will.

In my deepest grief I have offered him, whom I so dreaded to lose, to God. I cannot help being touched at the tenderness with which you feel for me. I pray that He, whose love inspires you, may reward you a hundred fold.

LETTER XL.

[TO THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY.]

THAT THE LOVE OF GOD OUGHT TO BE OUR PRINCIPLE OF ACTION, OUR END, AND OUR RULE IN EVERYTHING.

THE true way to love our neighbor, is found in the love of God. We must love other beings in him and for him. Mankind do not understand the love of God; therefore they fear it, and separate themselves from it. It is from this fear that they cannot realize this filial and intimate communion of children with a beneficent parent. They think only of a powerful and severe master. They are ever constrained and troubled in their intercourse with him. They perform good actions with unwillingness, that they may avoid punishment; they would do evil if they dared, and if they could hope to do it with impunity. The love of God is an oppressive debt, that they think they must pay; they try to elude it by the performance of certain ceremonies and an external homage, which they would substitute for a sincere and practical love of God. They practise arts with their Creator, in hopes to escape by giving the least they possibly can to Him! Oh! if men did but know

what the love of God is, they would not desire any other felicity.

The love of God demands of us only innocent and right conduct. It bids us do for his sake what reason dictates to be done. It calls upon us to do from love for Him, what men of the world do from a sense of honor, or from self-love. It forbids nothing that the right exercise of reason does not forbid. Let us place everything in the order in which God has established it in the world. Let us do the same right things, but let us do them for the sake of Him who created us, and to whom we owe everything.

This love of God does not demand of Christians those austerities practised by hermits. It seldom requires brilliant and heroic actions, or the renunciation of any rightful possessions; it only commands us not to make them our idols, but to enjoy them in the divine order, and with our hearts fixed on the Giver. The love of God does not increase the number of our trials; we find these already thickly scattered over every condition of life. They spring from the infirmities of our bodies, and from our passions; they arise from our imperfections, and from those of others with whom we are obliged to live. It is not the love of God that causes these sufferings; on the contrary, it is this alone that can soften them by the consolations it yields. It diminishes



them, for it moderates our ardent passions and unreasonable sensibilities, which are the causes of all our real evils. If the love of God were genuine in our hearts, it would cure our griefs and fill us with a peaceful joy.

Mankind are great enemies to themselves, in resisting and fearing this pure sentiment. It renders all other precepts light and easy. What we do from fear is always wearisome, hard, painful, oppressive. But all that we do from love, from persuasion, from a free and willing mind, however it may oppose the pleasures of sense, becomes agreeable to us. The desire of pleasing God makes us willing to suffer, if it is his will that we should. The sorrow in which we acquiesce, is no longer a sorrow.

The love of God never disturbs the order of things that he has established. It leaves the great in their grandeur, and makes them little, only in his sight who has made them great. It leaves those whose condition is low in their lowliness, and makes them contented with being nothing, except in his sight. This willingness to be in the lowest place, has nothing of debasement in it; it is true greatness.

The true love of God regulates and inspires all our attachments. We never love our neighbor so truly, as when our love for him is prompted by the love of God. All other foundations for

our affections have reference to self. It is ourselves that we love in our friends, and this is an imperfect love. It is more like self-love than real friendship.

How, then, must we love our friends? We must love them in the way that God has ordained. We must love God in them. We must love the good things with which God has endowed them, and we must, for his sake, submit to the privation of those things which he has denied them. When we love them with reference to self, our self-love makes us impatient, sensitive, and jealous, demanding much, and deserving little; ever distrusting ourselves, and our friends. It soon becomes wearied and disgusted; it very soon sees the termination of what it believed was inexhaustible; it meets everywhere with disappointment; it looks for what is perfect, and finds it nowhere; it becomes dissatisfied, changes, and has no repose; while the friendship, that is regulated by the love of God, is patient with defects, and does not insist upon finding in our friends what God has not placed there. It thinks of God and of what he has given; it thinks that all is good, provided it is from Him, and it can support that which God suffers to be, and to which it is his will that we should submit, by conforming ourselves to his designs.

The love of God never looks for perfection in created beings. It knows that it dwells with him alone. As it never expects perfection, it is never disappointed. It loves God and all his gifts to every living thing, according to their respective value. It loves less what is less excellent, and more what is nearer to perfection. It loves all, for there is no one that is not endowed with some good which is the gift of God, and it remembers that the vilest may become good, and receive that grace which they now want. He who loves God, loves all his works — all that he has commanded us to love. He loves more those whom God has pleased to render more dear to him. He sees in an earthly parent the love of his heavenly Father. In a relative, in a friend, he acknowledges those tender ties that God has ordained. The more strictly these bonds are in the order of his providence, the more the love of God sanctions them, and renders them strong and intimate.

Can we love God without loving those beings whom he has commanded us to love? It is He that inspires this love; it is his will that we should love them; shall we not obey Him?

This love can endure all things, suffer all things, hope all things, for our neighbor. It can conquer all difficulties; it flows from the heart, and sheds a charm upon the manners. It is



melted at the sorrows of others, and thinks nothing of its own; it gives consolation where it is needed; it is gentle; it adapts itself to others; it weeps with those who weep, it rejoices with those who rejoice; it is all things to all men, not in a forced appearance and in cold demonstrations, but from a full and overflowing heart, in which the love of God is a living spring of the tenderest, the deepest, and the truest feeling. Nothing is so sterile, so cold, so senseless as a heart that loves only itself in all things; while nothing can exceed the frankness, the tenderness, the gentle loveliness of a heart, filled and animated by the divine love.

LETTER XLI.

FROM THE "LETTERS ON RELIGION."

THE SOUL OF MAN IS IMMORTAL.

This question is not a difficult one, when it is reduced to its just limits. It is true that the soul of man is not a being by itself, possessing a necessary existence. There is but One who derives his existence solely from himself, and





who can never lose it, and who imparts it to others according to his pleasure.

God need not exercise a direct power to annihilate the soul of man. He would only have to withdraw that which has continued his being every moment from his birth, to replunge him into the nothingness whence he originally drew him; as a man would merely open his hand to let a stone fall that he had held in the air.

The question that may reasonably be asked, is not, whether the soul of man may be annihilated, if it were the will of God; it is manifest that it might be; but what is his will with regard to it, is the inquiry.

Does, then, the soul contain within itself the seeds of destruction, which must, after a time, terminate its existence? or, can we prove, philosophically, that it does not? The following is a negative proof.

When we think of the essential distinctions between the body and the soul, we are astonished at their union; and it is only by the operation of the power of God that we can comprehend how they can be so united and made to act in concert, when composed of such different elements. The body does not think. The soul is indivisible, has no extent, no form, is invested with none of the properties of the body. Ask any one if his thoughts are round or square,

white or yellow, cold or hot, divisible into six or twelve pieces; and instead of answering you, he will laugh at the question. Ask him if the atoms, of which his body is composed, are wise or foolish; if they know themselves, if they are virtuous; whether the round atoms have more sense and goodness than the square; he would still only laugh, and could hardly believe you were in earnest.

Go a little further, and suppose the atoms of whatever form you please; make them as impalpable as possible, and ask if it can be, that a moment will come when these atoms, from being without any consciousness, will begin all at once to know themselves, to understand all that is around them, and to say to themselves, I believe this, and I do not believe that; I love this thing, and I hate another. The person of whom you would ask these questions, would call it child's play.

The absurdity of these questions proves, that none of the ideas that we have of the nature of bodies, enter into our conceptions of mind; that we do not connect the thinking being with the body, or the being of space. As the distinction is so radical, the natures of these two beings so opposed, it is not astonishing that their union should be dissolved without either of them ceasing to exist. We ought, on the contrary, to be

surprised, that two natures so unlike can continue their operations in harmony for so long a time. What, then, shall we conclude? that one of these beings shall be annihilated as soon as their unnatural union shall cease? Suppose two bodies of exactly the same nature; separate them, you destroy neither. As the one is not the other, it may exist or be annihilated without reference to the other. Their separation produces their mutual independence. But if we may reason thus of two bodies, really of the same nature, with how much more reason may we use this argument in relation to the soul and the body, whose union seems unnatural, so unlike are they in everything. On the other hand, the cessation of this transient union of these two natures, cannot be to either the cause of its destruction; the annihilation of one would not be, on any ground, the cause of the annihilation of the other. A being that has not been the the cause of the existence of another, cannot be the cause of its annihilation. It then is clear as day, that the disunion of the body from the soul cannot cause the annihilation of either, and that even the destruction of the body cannot put an end to the existence of the soul.

The union of the body and the soul consists only in a mutual concert or relationship between the thoughts of the one and the movements of

the other; it is easy to see what the cessation of their connection would produce. It is a forced union between two beings entirely dissimilar and independent. God alone could, by his all-powerful will, subject two beings so different in their nature and operations to this mutual dependence. Let this arbitrary and determined will of God cease to act, this forced union would immediately terminate; just as a stone would fall to the ground when it was no longer held up in the air. Each party would recover its natural independence of the operations of the other. In this case, the soul, far from being annihilated by this disunion, which only restores it to its original state, becomes free to think independently of the body; just as I am free and at liberty to walk alone, and according to my inclinations, as soon as they have set me free from another to whom a superior power has bound me.

The end of this union is only disencumbrance and pure liberty, just as the union itself was only thraldom and subjection. It is then that the soul can think independently of all the movements of the body, as we, of the Christian faith, suppose that angels who have never been confined to bodies, think in heaven. Why then should we fear this disunion which can alone effect the entire freedom of the thoughts?



But the body itself is not annihilated, not one atom of it perishes. All that takes place in what we call death, is a simple derangement of the organs; its most minute corpuscles exhale, the whole machine is dissolved and decomposed. In whatever spot dissolution may take place, wherever accident may carry the remains of the body, not one particle ever ceases to exist. Why then should we fear that this other substance, so much more noble, this thinking being that we call the soul, should be annihilated? How can we believe that the body, that cannot annihilate itself, has the power to destroy the soul that is so superior to it, which is a stranger to it, and absolutely independent of it? The disunion of these two beings cannot produce the destruction of either.

We readily believe that no particle of the body is lost at this separation. Why are we so eager to find reasons for believing that the soul, which is incomparably more perfect, is annihilated? It is true that God might destroy it, if he pleased, at any time; but there is no more reason for believing that he would annihilate it at the moment of its disunion with the body, than during its union. What we call death being only a simple derangement of the corpuscles that form the organs, we have no right to say that this occurs in the soul, precisely as

in the body. The soul, which is a thinking being, has none of the properties of the body; it has neither different parts, nor figure, nor relative proportions and movements, nor change of situation. Thus no derangement like that of the body can take place.

The soul, this thinking and willing self, is a simple being, one by itself and indivisible. There never are, in the same man, two selves, nor two halves of the same self. Objects are presented by different organs, producing different sensations; but all these different canals pour themselves into a common centre, where they all unite. It is this self, which is so truly one, that by it alone each man has a true identity, and is not many instead of one man. We cannot see it, nor hear it, nor touch it. We conceive of the soul from its power of thought and will, of the body from its extent and form. As soon as we think of the real distinction of the soul from the body, we must acknowledge that it does not possess either divisibility, or form, or arrangement. The body that has organs may lose the arrangement of its parts, and change its form, and be decomposed, but the soul cannot lose an arrangement of parts that it has never possessed, and that does not belong to it.

It may be said that the soul, being created

only to be united to the body, is so connected with it, that its borrowed existence ceases as soon as its association with the body terminates. But it is speaking without proof, and at ran dom, to say, that the soul is created with an existence limited to the time of its connection with the body. Whence do they draw this unreasonable conclusion, and with what right do they take it for granted instead of proving it? The body is certainly less perfect than the soul, as it is more perfect to think than not to think; we see, nevertheless, that the existence of the body is not confined to its union with the soul. After death has interrupted this connection, the body still exists in minute particles. We observe only two things; one is, that the body crumbles to dust, and is decomposed; this cannot happen to the soul, for it is simple, indivisible, and without arrangement of parts; the other is, that the body no longer moves in dependence upon the thoughts of the soul. Ought we not to conclude on the same ground, and with more reason, that the soul also exists, and that it then begins to think, independently of the body? That the operation follows the existence, is acknowledged by all philosophers. These two beings are independent of each other as much in nature as in operation; as the body does not depend upon the soul for its move-

ments, neither does the soul require the assistance of the body for its thoughts.

It was only from circumstances that these two beings, so unlike and so independent, were subjected to acting in concert; the termination of their transient union leaves them free to operate, each one according to his own nature, that has no mutual relation to the other.

In fine, this becomes the question; whether God, who has the power to annihilate the soul of man, or to continue its existence forever, has willed its destruction or its preservation? There seems not the least reason for believing that He, who does not annihilate the least atom in the universe, wills the annihilation of the soul; and there is not the least appearance that such is its fate at the moment when it is separated from the body, since it is a being entirely distinct and independent. This separation being only the end of a subjection to a certain concert of operations with the body, it is manifest that it is the deliverance of the soul, and not the cause of its annihilation.

We must acknowledge, however, that we ought to believe in this annihilation, so extraordinary and so difficult to comprehend, if God himself has declared it in his word. What depends only upon his arbitrary word, can only be revealed to us by himself. Those who will



believe the mortality of the soul against all probability, ought to prove to us that God has spoken to us to assure us of it. It is by no means necessary for us to prove that God does not will this annihilation; we are satisfied with the supposition that the soul of man, which, next to God, is the most perfect thing that we have any knowledge of, is less liable to lose its existence than the mean and imperfect substances that are around it; now the annihilation of the least atom is without example in the universe since the creation. We are satisfied, then, with the supposition, that, as the least atom is not lost, so the soul of man is not liable to annihilation. This is the most reasonable and the most decided judgment from the first impression. It is for our adversaries to dispossess us of our conviction, by clear and unquestionable proofs. These they can obtain only by a positive declaration from God himself.

We produce the book which bears every mark of a divine origin, for it has taught us to know and to love supremely the true God. It is this book that speaks in the character of God, when it says, "I am that I am." No other book has described the Supreme Being in a manner worthy of him. The gods of Homer subject divinity to disgrace and derision. The book that we have in our hands, after having shown

God to us as he is, teaches us the only worship that is worthy of him. Its object is not to appease him by the blood of victims, but to lead us to love him supremely, and to prefer his will to our own; to have this love of God enter into all our virtues, and eradicate every vice.

There is but one book in the world that makes religion consist in loving God more than ourselves, and renouncing self for him; all others that repeat this great truth are borrowed from this. All truth is taught in this fundamental truth. The book that has disclosed to us the nature of God, and the nature of man, and the true worship of the heart, must be divine. Where is there another religion in which this is the great truth? Moreover, this book, so divine in its doctrine, is full of prophecies, whose accomplishment is open to the observation of the world; as the reprobation of the Jews, and the admission of idolatrous nations to the true worship through the Messiah. Besides, this book is sacred as a record of miracles performed in open day, and in view of the greatest enemies to religion.

In fine, this book has done all that it says it could do; it has changed the face of the world; it has peopled the deserts with men, who have been angels in mortal bodies; it has taught and cherished, even in the midst of the most corrupt

and impious society, the most difficult and the most gentle virtues; it has persuaded the idolater of self to count himself as nothing, and to love supremely the invisible Being. Such a book ought to be read as if it descended from heaven to the earth. It is in this book, that God has declared to us a truth, already so rational, so probable in itself.

The same almighty and good Being, who alone could deprive us of life eternal, has here promised it to us; it is the hope of this life without end, that has taught so many martyrs to despise the short and suffering life of the body. Is it not reasonable that God, who proves the virtue of every man in this short life and who often leaves the impious in their prosperous course, while the just live and die amidst suffering and obscurity, should reserve to another life the chastisement of the one, and the reward of the other? This is what the sacred records teach us. Wonderful and blessed conformity between the word of God and the truth that we bear within us! All harmonize; philosophy, the supreme authority of the promises, and this deep sentiment of truth imprinted upon our hearts.

Whence is it that men are so incredulous concerning the blessed truth of their immortality? The impious declare that they are without hope,

and that they are, after a few days, to be swallowed up forever in the gulf of annihilation; they rejoice at it, they triumph at their approaching extinction; they, who love themselves so madly, seem to be enamored with this horrible doctrine; they court despair. Others tell them that they have resource in the life eternal, but they are angry at the thought; it exasperates them; they fear being convinced. They exercise all their ingenuity in cavilling at these powerful proofs. They prefer perishing in the indulgence of their insensate pride and brutal passions, to living eternally and submitting to be virtuous. O monstrous frenzy! wild, absurd self-love, that turns against itself and becomes its own enemy!

LETTER XLII.

UPON THE TRUE WORSHIP OF GOD.

It appears to me that the character of the true worship is not to fear God as we fear a terrible and powerful man, who destroys all that resist him. The Pagans offered incense and victims to certain malignant and fearful divinities, to appease their wrath. This is not my

idea of God. He is infinitely just and almighty, and doubtless he is to be feared; but only by those who refuse to love him and make themselves acquainted with him. The best fear we can have of God, is the fear lest we should not please him, and lest we should not do his will.

The fear of punishment is useful to men, who have wandered from the right path; it may restrain from crime, but it is only useful as it is the means of leading them to love him. There is not a man in the world, who desires to be feared rather than loved by his children. When we perform good actions from fear alone, we perform them merely to avoid suffering; and of course, if we could avoid the punishment and dispense with their performance, we should do so.

There is not only no parent who would be pleased with being honored in this way, or friend who would grant the name of friend to those who were bound to him only by such ties; but there is not even a master who would love or reward his domestics or accept their services, if he saw they were bound to him by fear alone, and not by any real love. With how much more reason is it that God, who has given us intelligence and affections, in order that we may know and love him, cannot be satisfied with a

servile fear, but desires our hearts, and that our love should return to the fountain whence it first flowed.

LETTER XLIII.

UPON THE MEANS BY WHICH MEN MAY BECOME RELIGIOUS.

We are too much impressed with the great disparity that exists between the grossness of the minds of most men, and the grandeur of those truths which must be understood by one who would become a Christian.

What is there to which sensual and evil passions have not enabled the weakest and least cultivated men to attain? What is there that the vilest men have not invented for the perfection of the arts, when avarice has excited them? What means will not a prisoner invent in his dungeon to escape from it; to obtain news of his friends, to give them intelligence of himself, or to deceive those who hold him captive? What pains would not a man take to penetrate the cause of his situation, if he were to find himself when he awoke from sleep transported into a desert and unknown island? What would he not do to discover how he had been removed



during his sleep, to ascertain whether there were any vestiges of inhabitants there, to procure subsistence, to clothe and shelter his body, and to find means of returning to his own country?

Such are the natural resources of the human mind among the least cultivated men. The will is all that is essential to enable men to succeed in whatever is not absolutely impossible.

Love truth as much as you love health, vanity freedom, pleasure, even your fancy, and you will find it. Be as curious to know Him who made you, and to whom you owe everything, as the lowest-minded men are to satisfy their earthly desires, and you will find God and life eternal.

Let men act in this world, as he who finds himself when he awakes in a desert and unknown island. Let men, instead of being engrossed with what they call fortune, diversions, reputation, politics, eloquence, poetry, be occupied with answering these questions: "Who am I? Where am I? Whence did I come? By whose power did I come hither? Why and by whom am I created? Whither am I to go? Who are these beings around me that resemble me? Whence do they come?

Why will not men take as much pains to know themselves, as Anacharsis the Scythian did to find the truth? as the Greeks did, who went into Egypt, Asia, and even India, to get

wisdom? It requires but little light to see that we are in darkness, but a little effort to become acquainted with our own weakness: to be a true philosopher man needs only to know his ignorance. When will men strive to develop the great mystery of their own existence? The mind of every man expands by use; it becomes elevated and enlarged in proportion to the exercise of his will, and to the intellectual efforts he makes. Let the soul be turned as strenuously towards good, as it usually is towards evil, and you will find that the simple love of goodness will give incredible resources to the spirit in the search after truth.

If men loved truth better than themselves, as it ought to be loved, they would strive for it as earnestly as they now strive after the illusions that flatter their vanity. Love, with little intellect will perform miracles. It is not important that uncultivated men should be able to explain, with method and precision, how they are persuaded in favor of virtue and religion; it is enough that they are persuaded by correct and substantial reasons, though they cannot analyze the principles on which their conviction rests, nor refute the subtle objections which may embarrass them.

Nothing is easier than to confuse a man of good sense with regard to the reality of his own

body, although it is still impossible for him to doubt of it seriously. Tell him that the time which he calls awaking, is only a time of more profound sleep than the sleep of the night; tell him that he will awake perhaps at death from the sleep of his whole life, which is only a dream, just as he thinks he awakes every morning from the dreams of the night; urge him to show you any difference that is precise and decisive between the illusion of a dream of the night, when a man is sure he is what he is not, and the illusion of the dream of a whole life; — you put it out of his power to answer you; but it is not less out of his power to believe you; he will smile at your ingenuity; he feels, though he is unable to demonstrate it, that your subtle reasons have only darkened a clear truth, instead of throwing light upon what was obscure.

There are a hundred examples of truths which men cannot doubt, and which seem to escape them as soon as they are pressed to answer an ingenious objection to them. Truth is not the less true, and the deep conviction which all men have of it, is not less a real and invincible belief, although no one has the power to explain his reasons for believing. The greatest philosophers are persuaded of a great number of truths, which they cannot clearly develop, nor refute the objections to them.

It is very true, as some author of our time has said, "men have not sufficient courage to follow their own reason;" and I am well persuaded that no man without the grace of God, will, by his own natural strength, have all the constancy, all the method, all the moderation, all the distrust of himself, that are necessary for the discovery even of those truths which do not require the superior light of faith; in a word, that natural philosophy, which follows, without prejudice, or impatience, or pride, the deductions of purely human reason, is a prodigy. I trust only in the grace of God to direct our reason even within its own narrow bounds in the discovery of religion; but I believe with St. Augustin, that God endows every man with the first germ of this divine power, which imperceptibly mingles with his reason, and prepares him to arrive gradually at faith. This preparation of the heart is at first the more indistinct, because it is general in its effects; it is a confused sentiment of insufficiency, a desire after what we have not, a wish to find without ourselves that which we cannot find within, a melancholy consciousness of a void in our hearts, a hunger and thirst after truth, a sincere disposition to readily believe ourselves deceived, and to think that we are in want of assistance to save us from error.

This is the secret beginning of the birth of the

new man; the first springing up in the soul of that healing and free grace, which gradually dissipates all darkness, and conquers all the corrupt passions of man. It will be said that this is not sufficient to lead to the belief in Jesus Christ, since our faith comes by our senses, and we should not have heard of the truth, if the evangelists had not been sent. But I maintain, that if the inward dispositions answer to the grace bestowed, God will finish by his providence the work that his love has already commenced. He will doubtless by a miracle enlighten a man, and lead him by the hand to the Gospel, sooner than he will let him be deprived of a light which he is worthy to receive.

A man who loves God more than himself, and who forgets himself in the search after truth, has already found it in his own heart. The religion of Jesus already operates within him, as it did in the hearts of just men under the ancient law; as in the descendants of Noah, in Job, and in the other worshippers of the true God. St. Augustin was assured that Cornelius had received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized; he believed that God never abandons any but those who deserve it, that he never deprives any one of the supreme good; he adds, in the words of the Apostle, that those Gentiles, who have the law written in their hearts, have a part in the

Gospel. You perceive that only those infidels are culpable, who have received without profiting by it, a real mercy, an offered grace that would have enabled them to believe. It will be imputed to no one to have sinned, where he had not the power to know his duty.

If we suppose the case of an infidel, who faithfully uses the light of his reason, and that first germ of the grace of God implanted within him, to seek for truth with real piety, we must believe that God will not refuse the knowledge of himself to such a man. Rather than his children should be deprived of supreme felicity, which he has freely promised them, God would enlighten a man living in an unknown forest, or in a desert island, either by an interior and extraordinary revelation, or by sending to him teachers of his word.

We need only bring to our minds the idea of God, to be assured that he never will desert us. Shall we fear that the supreme Love will cease to love? Can we believe that the infinite Good, ever pouring himself forth on all, will deny himself to any who are not unworthy of him? St. Augustin, on the contrary says, that God does everything to save us, except depriving us of our free will.

Whom then shall we accuse? God, who cannot, without departing from himself, cease to be



infinitely good, compassionate, beneficent, watchful, full of tenderness towards all his children? or man, who, according to his own confession, is vain, stubborn, presumptuous, ungrateful, idolatrous of himself, and averse to the government of his Creator? Do not let us blaspheme against God, that we may excuse our own demerits; pride and selfishness are the causes of our errors.

God would have us love him supremely; we must overthrow and destroy this idol, self. Jesus Christ has exterminated visible idolatry; but the idolatry within still prevails everywhere. Our reason, divested of passion, pride, and evil desires, would naturally arrive at this truth, that we have not made ourselves, and that we owe this self, which is so dear to us, to him who gave it.

Let us add to these reflections the true idea of the Christian religion. In what does it consist? In the love of God. He wills that we should worship him alone in our hearts. This is the true worship which the Pagans never understood, and which the Jews only comprehended imperfectly, although the foundation of it was laid in their own law. According to St. Augustin, men understand the whole sense of the Scriptures as soon as they know what it is to love God; in truth this command includes all others. The Jewish religion was only the

imperfect beginning of that adoration in spirit and in truth, which is the only worship worthy of the Supreme Being. Divest that religion of temporal blessings, of mysterious emblems, of ceremonies established in order to preserve the people from idolatry, in fine, of its legal policy, and the love of God alone remains; afterwards unfold and perfect this love, and you have Christianity, of which Judaism was but the germ and preparation.

REFLECTIONS

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE MONTH.

FIRST DAY.

ON THE LITTLE FAITH THAT THERE IS IN THE WORLD.

"When the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?" — LUKE xviii. 8.

IF he were to come at this moment, would he find it in us? Where is our faith? What are the proofs of it? Do we believe that this life is only a short passage to a better? Do we believe that we must suffer with Jesus before we can reign with him? Do we look upon the world as a vain show, and death as the entrance into true happiness? Do we live by faith? Does it animate us? Do we enjoy the eternal truths that it presents to us? Do we feed our souls with them, as we nourish our bodies with healthful aliment? Do we accustom ourselves to view everything with the eye of faith? Alas!

instead of living by faith, we extinguish it in our souls. How can we truly believe what we profess to believe, and act as we act?

May we not fear, lest the kingdom of heaven be taken from us, and given to others who will bring forth more fruit? This kingdom of heaven is faith, when it dwells and reigns in the heart. Blessed are the eyes that see this kingdom; flesh and blood have not seen it; earthly wisdom is blind to it. To realize its glories, we must be born again; and to do this we must die to self.

SECOND DAY.

ON THE ONLY ROAD TO HEAVEN.

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate."—LUKE xiii. 24.

THE kingdom of heaven is entered by violence; by the strait gate, by self-denial, and humiliation. The broad gate, through which we see the multitude pass, and which is ever open, leads to perdition; let us beware of entering it. We must seek the footsteps of the saints, the path worn by penitents who have climbed the precipice, and gained a sure footing upon the heights, by the sweat of their brows; and even then at the very last step, it may re-

quire a violent effort to enter in at the strait gate of eternity.

It is ordained by God that we be conformed to the image of his Son, that we may be crucified to self, that we renounce sensual pleasures, and submit, like him, to suffering. But how great is our blindness! we would quit the cross that unites us to our Master. Let us live, and let us die, with him who came to show us the true way to heaven. We must take up the cross, if we would follow him. We suffer in the narrow way, but we hope. We suffer, but we behold the heavens opening. We suffer, but we are willing to suffer. We love God, and his love will be our recompense.

THIRD DAY.

ON TRUE DEVOTION.

"Who deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."
James i. 26.

What mistakes are made about devotion! One man makes it consist in a multitude of prayers, another in a great many outward acts tending to the glory of God or the good of his neighbor. Some think it a continual desire of

salvation; others an austere life. But they are all deceived, if they think they have arrived at the true foundation and essential principle of piety.

That piety which is sanctified, and which is a true devotion to God, consists in doing all his will precisely at the time, in the situation, and under the circumstances, in which he has placed us. Perform as many brilliant works as you may, you will be recompensed only for having done the will of your sovereign Master. Perfect devotedness (and from this has arisen the term devotion) exacts, not only that we do the will of God, but that we do it with love. God would have us serve him with delight; it is our hearts that he demands of us. Such a Master is entitled to our love.

This devotion must be manifested in everything. In what contradicts our views, our inclinations, or our projects, it should make us stand ready to yield up our fortunes, our time, our liberty, our life, and our reputation to the will of God. These are the dispositions, and such will be the effects of true devotion.



FOURTH DAY.

ON WEAK AND IMPERFECT CONVERSIONS.

People who have lived far from God, are apt to think themselves very near him as soon as they make some steps towards him.

Thus, polished and enlightened men make the same mistake as the peasant does, who thinks he has been at court, because he has seen the king. They quit their most heinous vices, and adopt a rather less criminal life; but still effeminate, worldly, and vain, they judge of themselves, not by the Gospel, which is the only rule they ought to follow, but by a comparison between their present life and the one they formerly led.

This is enough, they think, to canonize them; and they remain in a profound tranquillity as to what is yet to be done for their salvation. Such a state is perhaps more to be apprehended than one of open sin, for this might awaken conscience, and faith might revive, and they might make a great effort; while the other state only serves to stifle salutary remorse, and establish a false peace in the heart, that renders the evil irremediable.

These Christians are low-minded and cowardly; they would possess heaven at a low price;

they do not think of what it has cost those who have obtained it; they do not consider what is due to God.

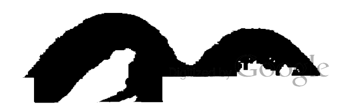
Such men are far from being converted. If the Gospel had been confided to them, it would not have been what it is now; we should have had something far more pleasing to our self-love. But the Gospel is immutable, and it is by that we must be judged. Let us follow this sure guide, and fear nothing so much as to be flattered and betrayed.

FIFTH DAY.

ON A RIGHT SPIRIT.

"Your heavenly Father will give the good Spirit to them that ask him." — LUKE xi. 13.

THERE is no right spirit, but the Spirit of God. The spirit that leads us away from the true good, however ingenious, however enticing, however able it may be to procure us perishing riches, is only a spirit of illusion and falsehood. Would we wish to be borne upon a brilliant and magnificent car, if it were hurrying us on to an abyss? Our souls were given us to conduct us to the true and sovereign good. There



can be no right spirit, but the Spirit of God; there is none other that leads us to him.

There is a great difference between a noble, a high, and a right spirit; those may please and excite admiration, but it is only a right spirit that can save us and make us truly happy, by its stability and uprightness.

Be not conformed to the world. Despise what men call *spirit*, as much as they admire it. It is their idol, but nothing is more vain. We must reject, not only this false and dazzling show of spirit, but also the worldly policy which has a more solemn aspect and seems more profitable; and enter, like little children, into the simplicity of faith, innocence of manners, a horror of sin, and that humility which is ready to take up the cross.

SIXTH DAY.

ON PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.

"In your patience you shall possess your souls."—Luke xxi. 19.

The soul loses command of itself, when it is impatient. Whereas, when it submits, without a murmur, it possesses itself in peace, and God is with it. To be impatient, is to desire what

we have not, and not to desire what we have. An impatient soul is a prey to passions unrestrained, either by reason or faith. What weakness, what delusion! When we acquiesce in an evil, it is no longer such. Why make a real calamity of it, by resistance? Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul. We may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain, if our will remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence even in disagreeable things, not in an exemption from suffering.

SEVENTH DAY.

ON SUBMISSION AND CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." — MATT. vi. 10

NOTHING is done on earth or in heaven, but by the will or by the permission of God; yet men do not desire this will, but inasmuch as it promotes their own wishes.

Let us desire that his will be done, and only his, and we shall make a heaven of earth. We must thank God for everything, for evil as well as good things; for evil becomes good when he sends it. We must not murmur at the conduct



of his providence; we shall find it is all in wisdom, and adore it. O God, what do I see in the course of the stars, in the order of the seasons, but thy will which they accomplish? Let it also be fulfilled in my soul.

Jesus said, in speaking of his heavenly Father, "For I always do those things that please him;" may we learn how far we can follow this example. He is our model, he whose life was devotion to the will of God. May we be united to him in this spirit; may we no longer follow our own inclinations, but may we not only pray. and teach, and suffer, but eat, drink, and converse, — do all things, with reference to his will. Then will our lives be a continual self-sacrifice, and an incessant prayer.

EIGHTH DAY.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER.

"Pray without ceasing." — 1 Thes. v. 17.

Such is our dependence upon God, that we ought not only to do his will, but we ought to desire to know how we can please him. How unspeakable a happiness it is to be allowed to

approach our Creator with confidence, to open our hearts to him, and through prayer to hold intimate communion with him. He invites us to pray. "Will he not," says St. Cyprian, "grant us those blessings that he commands us to ask for?" Let us pray then with faith. Happy the soul that is blessed in its prayers with the presence of God! St. James says, "If any among you is afflicted, let him pray:" alas! we often think this heavenly employment wearisome. The heartlessness of our prayers is the source of our other infidelities.

Ask, and it shall be given to you; knock, and it shall be opened; seek, and you shall find. If we had only to ask for riches, in order to obtain them, what eagerness, what assiduity, what perseverance we should display. If by seeking we could find a treasure, we could remove mountains for it. If we could by knocking enter into the counsels of the king, or a high office, with what reiterated strokes should we make ourselves heard. What are we not willing to do for false honor; what rebuffs, what crosses will we not endure for the phantom of worldly glory! What pains will we not take for miserable pleasures that leave only remorse in their path!

The treasure of the favor of God is the only one we cannot submit to ask for, the only one that we are discouraged from seeking. Still, to

secure this, we have only to ask for it; for the word of Jesus Christ is true, it is our conduct that is unfaithful.

NINTH DAY.

ON ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF GOD.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." —JOHN vi. 69.

IT is to Jesus Christ that we must listen. Men must not be heard or believed, but inasmuch as they speak with the truth and from the authority of Jesus. He spoke and acted, that we might attend to and study the details of his life. Mistaken creatures that we are! we follow our own fancies, and neglect the words of eternal life.

We often say, that we desire to know what we must do to become more virtuous; but when the word of God teaches us, our courage fails us in the execution. We are conscious that we are not what we ought to be. We see our own wretchedness; it increases every day, and we think we have done a great deal in saying that we desire to be delivered from it. But we must count for nothing any resolution that falls short of the absolute determination to sacrifice what-

ever arrests us in our progress to perfection. Let us listen to what God inspires, prove the spirit so as to know if it comes from him, and then follow where that may lead us.

TENTH DAY.

ON THE RIGHT USE OF CROSSES.

"They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its vices and lusts."—GAL. v. 24.

THE greater our dread of crosses, the more necessary they are for us. Be not cast down, when the hand of God is heavy upon you. We must measure the greatness of our evils by the violence of the remedies that the physician of souls thinks necessary for our cure. We may make our trials a source of love and confidence and consolation, saying with the Apostle, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Blessed are they who weep, they who sow in tears, for they shall reap, with joy ineffable, the harvest of eternal life and felicity.

St. Paul said, "I am nailed to the cross with

Jesus Christ." Let us pray for his spirit of love and self-renunciation. What can we suffer that he has not suffered. Weak, cowardly nature, be silent; look at the Master, and be ashamed to complain. Let thy love to him reconcile thee to thy cross; then, though thou shalt suffer, it will be willingly.

ELEVENTH DAY.

ON MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY.

"Learn of me; for I am meek and humble of heart."
MATT. xi. 29

It is Jesus who gives us this lesson of meekness and humility; no other being could have taught it without our revolting at it. In all others we find imperfection, and our pride would not fail to take advantage of it. It was necessary that he should himself teach us; and he has condescended to teach us by his example. What high authority is this! we have only to be silent and adore, to admire and to imitate.

The Son of God has descended upon the earth, and taken upon himself a mortal body and expired upon the cross, that he might teach us humility. Who shall not be humble now?

Surely not the sinner who has merited so often, by his ingratitude, God's severest punishments. Humility is the source of all true greatness; pride is ever impatient, ready to be offended. He who thinks nothing is due to him, never thinks himself ill-treated; true meekness is not mere temperament, for this is only softness or weakness. To be *meek* to others, we must renounce self. The Saviour adds, *lowly in heart:* this is a humility to which the will entirely consents, because it is the will of God, and for his glory.

TWELFTH DAY.

ON THE FAULTS OF OTHERS.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." — GAL. vi. 2.

CHARITY does not demand of us that we should not see the faults of others; we must, in that case, shut our eyes. But it commands us to avoid attending unnecessarily to them, and that we be not blind to the good, while we are so clear-sighted to the evil that exists. We must remember, too, God's continual kindness to the most worthless creature, and think how



many causes we have to think ill of ourselves; and finally we must consider that charity embraces the very lowest human being. It acknowledges that in the sight of God, the contempt that we indulge for others has in its very nature a harshness and arrogance opposed to the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The true Christian is not insensible to what is contemptible; but he bears with it.

Because others are weak, should we be less careful to give them their due? You who complain so much of what others make you suffer, do you think that you cause others no pain? You who are so annoyed at your neighbor's defects, are you perfect?

How astonished you would be, if those whom you cavil at should make all the comments that they might upon you. But even if the whole world were to bear testimony in your favor, God, who knows all, who has seen all your faults, could confound you with a word; and does it never come into your mind to fear, lest he should demand of you why you had not exercised towards your brother a little of that mercy, which he who is your master so abundantly bestows upon you?

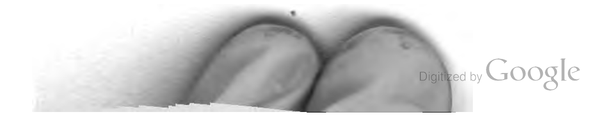
THIRTEENTH DAY.

ON THE ONE THING NECESSARY.

"Thou are anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary."—LUKE x. 41, 42.

WE think we have many important concerns, but we have really but one. If that is attended to, all others will be done; if that is wanting, all the rest, however successful they may seem to be, will go to ruin. Why then should we divide our hearts and our occupations? Oh! thou sole business of life, henceforth thou shalt have my undivided attention. Cheered by the presence of God, I will do at the moment, without anxiety, according to the strength which he shall give me, the work that his providence assigns me. I will leave the rest; it is not my affair.

"Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Each one of us must be ready to say this in the day in which we must render an account. I ought to consider the duty to which I am called each day, as the work that God has given me to do, and to apply myself to it in a manner worthy of his glory, that is to say, with exactness and in peace. I must neglect nothing; I must be violent in nothing; for



it is dangerous either to perform the works of God with negligence, or to appropriate them to ourselves by self-love and false zeal. In that case, we act from our own individual feeling, and we do the work ill, for we get fretted and excited, and think only of success. The glory of God is the pretext that covers this illusion. Self-love, under the disguise of zeal, complains and thinks itself injured if it does not succeed. Almighty God, grant me thy grace to be faithful in action, and not anxious about success. My only concern is to do thy will, and to lose myself in thee, when engaged in duty. It is for thee to give to my weak efforts such fruits as thou seest fit; none, if such be thy pleasure.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

ON A PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

"Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"
LUKE xii. 20.

NOTHING is so terrible as death, to those who are strongly attached to this life. It is strange that we do not form a more just judgment of the present and of the future. We are as in-



fatuated with this world as if it were never to come to an end. The names of those who now play the most distinguished parts in life will perish with them. It is the will of God, that all living things shall be swallowed in a profound oblivion, man more especially. The pyramids of Egypt shall stand, while the names of those who erected them are unknown.

What then can we accomplish here? To what purpose is the happiest life, if by a wise and Christian course it does not conduct us to a happy death? "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." These words are addressed to each one of us, of whatever age and in whatever rank we may be placed. Why do we so cling to life? and whence comes it that we shrink so from death? It is, that we do not desire the kingdom of heaven, and the glories of a future world. Oh! ye dull souls, that cannot raise your thoughts above this world, where, by your own confession, you cannot find happiness. The true way to be ready for the last hour, is to employ the present hour well, and ever to expect the final one.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

ON OUR ETERNAL HOPES.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—1 Cor. ii. 9.

What a disproportion there is between what we endure here and what we hope for in heaven! The first Christians rejoiced without ceasing at the hope placed before them; for they believed that they saw the heavens opening to them. The cross, disgrace, punishment, the most cruel death could not discourage them. They trusted to that infinite goodness that would compensate them for all their suffering. They were transported with joy at being counted worthy to suffer; while we, cowardly spirits, cannot endure, because we cannot hope; we are overwhelmed by the least sorrow, and often by those troubles that spring from our own pride, or impudence, or effeminacy.

"They who sow in tears shall reap in joy." We must sow in order to reap. This life is the seed time; we shall enjoy the fruits of our labors in another. Earthly-minded men, weak and impatient as they are, would reap before they have sowed.

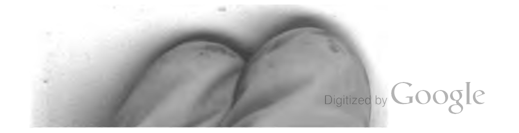
We desire that God would please us, that he would smooth the way that leads to him. We are willing to serve him, if it does not cost us much. To hope for a great reward, and suffer but little for it, this is what our self-love proposes. Blind that we are! shall we never know that the kingdom of heaven must suffer violence; that it is only strong and courageous souls that shall be counted worthy of victory? Weep, then, since blessed are they who mourn, for God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

ON OUR DAILY BREAD.

"Give us this day our daily bread." — Luke xi. 3.

What is this bread, O my God? It is not merely the support which thy providence supplies for the necessity of life; it is also the nourishment of truth which thou dispensest day by day to the soul; it is the bread of eternal life, giving it vigor, and making it grow in faith. All that is within and all that is without us, is bestowed by thee for the advancment of our souls in a life of faith and self-renunciation. I



have only then to receive this bread, and to accept, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, whatever thou shalt ordain, of bitterness in my external circumstances, or within my heart. For whatever happens to me each day is my daily bread, provided I receive it as from thy hands, and for the support of my soul.

It is hunger that makes the food for our bodies useful and agreeable to us. Let us hunger and thirst after righteousness. The food of the mind is truth and goodness; let us seek for it, feed upon it, and be strengthened by it. This is the spiritual bread of which we must eat. Let us hunger for it; let us humbly pray to God for it; let us be conscious of our weakness and need of it; let us read and let us pray, with this hunger after the food for our souls; let us thirst after the fountain of living waters. It is only an earnest and continual desire for instruction that renders us worthy to receive these heavenly truths. To each one this true bread of life is dispensed according to the measure of his desire for it.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

ON THE PEACE OF THE SOUL.

"Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth." — JOHN xiv. 27.

ALL men seek for peace, but they do not seek it where it is to be found. The peace that the world can give is as different from that which God bestows, as God is different from men; or rather, the world promises peace, but never gives it.

It presents some passing pleasures to us, but these cost more than they are worth. It is only the religion of Jesus that can give us peace. This sets us at peace with ourselves; it subdues our passions, and regulates our desires; it consoles us with the hope of everlasting good; it gives us the joy of the Holy Spirit; it enables us to be happy; it gives us peace of mind in the midst of outward trials; and as the source from whence it springs is inexhaustible, and as the recesses of the soul which it inhabits are inaccessible to the malignity of men, it is to the righteous a treasure that can never fail.

True peace is the possession of the favor of God. This is found only in submission, faith, and obedience to his laws; it is the result of a

pure and holy love for him. Resign every forbidden joy; restrain every wish that is not referred to his will; banish all eager desires, all anxiety. Desire only the will of God; seek him alone, and you will find peace; you shall enjoy it in spite of the world. What is it that troubles you? poverty, neglect, want of success, external or internal troubles? Look upon everything as in the hands of God, and as real blessings that he bestows upon his children, of which you receive your portion. Then the world may turn its face from you, but nothing will deprive you of peace.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

ON DECEITFUL PLEASURES.

"Laughter I counted madness; and to mirth I said: Why art thou vainly deceived?"—Eccl. ii. 2.

People of the world rejoice, as the sick man does in his delirium; or as they do, who have a pleasant dream. We attach ourselves to a shadow that fleeth away. We are delighted only because we are deceived. We think we have great possessions, when we are poor indeed.

When we awake from the sleep of death, we shall find our hands empty, and shall be ashamed of our joy. Wo to them who enjoy in this world a false happiness, that excludes the only true felicity. Let us ever say to these vain and transitory joys, Why temptest thou me? Nothing is worthy of our hearts, but our hope of future blessedness. All that does not rest upon this, is a dream.

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. The more we drink of the corrupt waters of the world, the more shall we thirst. In proportion as we yield to evil, are our hearts dissatisfied. Avarice and ambition experience more anxiety for those things that they do not possess, than pleasure from what they have.

Pleasure enervates the soul, corrupts it, and renders it insatiable; the more we yield, the more we desire to yield. It is easier to preserve our hearts in a state of holiness, Christian feeling, and self-denial, than to restore it or control it, when it has once got into the vortex of pleasure and self-indulgence.

Let us watch, then, over ourselves; let us beware of drinking of those waters that will only inflame our thirst. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence, lest the vain pleasures of the world should seduce them, and leave us at last in despair at finding ourselves deceived.

NINETEENTH DAY.

ON HOLY TEARS.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." — MATT. v. 4.

It is the goodness of God that inspires us with the fear of losing his love, the fear of departing from the right way. This excites the tears of holy men. If we think ourselves in danger of losing what is most precious to us, we must weep. When we see only vanity and blindness, contempt and disregard of God Almighty whom we adore, we must weep. God will not disapprove of our grief; it is he that inspires it. It is love for him that causes our tears to flow, and he himself will wipe them away.

TWENTIETH DAY.

ON WORLDLY WISDOM.

"For the wisdom of the flesh is death."—ROM. viii. 6.

The wisdom of the children of this world is great. Jesus Christ declares it in the Gospel, and it is often greater than that of the children



of light; but there is to be found in it, notwithstanding its specious and brilliant pretensions, a terrible defect. It is death to those who take it for the guide of their life.

This crooked policy, fertile of inventions, is opposed entirely to that from God, which ever goes straight forward in uprightness and simplicity. Of what benefit will all their talents be to these wise men of the world, if at the last they are caught in their own snares? The Apostle St. James calls this wisdom earthly, sensual, devilish; earthly, because it limits its desires to the possession of earthly good; sensual, because it labors only for those things that flatter the passions, and plunges men into sensual delights; diabolical, because, while it has the shrewdness, the penetration of a demon, it also has the malice of one. Its possessors think they deceive the whole world, but they only deceive themselves.

Blind are all those who think themselves wise, and have not the wisdom that Jesus taught. They are running in profound darkness after a phantom. They are like a man in a dream, who thinks that he is awake, and who imagines that the objects he sees are real. Thus deceived are they, who are called great in the world, wise in their generation, who are the victims of deceitful pleasures. It is only the

children of God who walk in the light of pure truth.

What awaits these men who are so full of their own vain and ambitious thoughts? Often disgrace, always death, the judgment of God, and eternity. These are the great objects that are ever before, and that ever await these men, but they do not discern them. Their worldly wisdom can foresee everything, except the downfall and annihilation of everything they hold dear. Deluded beings, when will you open your eyes to the light of Christianity, that will discover to you the nothingness of earthly glory!

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

ON TRUST IN GOD.

"It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man." — PSALM cxvii. 8.

We are ever ready to confide in weak friends, and we are afraid to trust in God. We believe the promises of the world, but we cannot believe the word of God! Let us make an effort to restore the divine order; let us confide with moderation in what depends upon ourselves,

but let us set no bounds to our confidence in God. Let us repress all eagerness, all inquietude, all that we call zeal. He who thus trusts in God becomes immovable as Mount Zion. Our trust should be more firm and elevated. "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

ON THE DEPTH OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

Let us give ourselves to God without any reserve, and let us not be afraid; he will fill our whole hearts, these hearts that the world may intoxicate, trouble, agitate, but cannot satisfy. He will deprive us only of those things that make us unhappy. Our occupations will not be changed, but they will be performed with reference to the will of God. We shall meet the approach of death in peace. It will be to us only the commencement of an immortal life. We shall, as St. Paul says, "not be unclothed, but be clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up in life," and then we shall comprehend the depth of the mercy of God

Let us contemplate, as in the presence of God, all the proofs that we have experienced of his mercy; the light which Jesus Christ has shed upon our soul, the pure affection that he has inspired, the sins that have been forgiven us, the snares which we have escaped, the protection we have received. Let our hearts be touched with the remembrance of all these precious proofs of his goodness. Add to this the sorrows that he has sent to sanctify our hearts; for we should look upon these as proofs of his love for us. Let gratitude for the past inspire us with confidence in the future. Let us never distrust him; let us fear only ourselves, remember that he is the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. He sometimes takes away his consolations from us, but his mercy ever remains.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

ON THE YOKE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." — MATT. xi. 30.

LET not the word *yoke* terrify us; we feel the weight of it, but we do not bear it alone. Jesus Christ will enable us to bear it, he will teach

us the charm of justice and truth, the chaste delights of virtue; his religion supports man against himself, against his corrupt desires, and makes him strong in spite of his weakness. Oh, ye of little faith, what do ye fear? You suffer, but you may suffer with peace, with love for God. You must fight, but you shall gain the victory; God is on your side, and he will crown you with his own hands. You weep, but he himself shall wipe away your tears. Is it to be lamented that we are delivered from the heavy yoke of the world, and have only to bear the light burden that Jesus Christ imposes? Do we fear being too free from self, from the caprices of our pride, the violence of our passions, and the tyranny of the world?

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

ON FALSE LIBERTY.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.."
2 Cor. iii. 17.

When we obey the world, we call ourselves free, because we follow our own inclinations. Foolish mistake! is there any condition in which

we have not as many masters as there are indi viduals with whom we are connected? Is there any one in which we do not depend even more upon the whims of others, than upon our own? All the commerce of life is continual constraint, from the thraldom of decorum and from the necessity of pleasing others.

Besides this, our own passions are worse than the most cruel tyrants. If we obey them only in part, we must maintain a continual contest with them, and have hardly time to breathe. Then they betray us, they distract our hearts, they tread under foot the laws of honor and reason, and never say, It is enough. If we yield ourselves up to them, where will they lead us? I shrink from the thought. Oh my God, preserve me from the fatal slavery that men madly call liberty. With thee alone is freedom. It is thy truth that makes us free. To serve thee is true dominion.

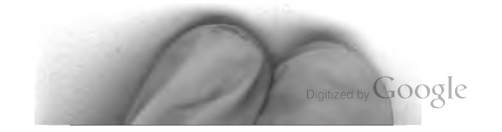
TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

ON THE DETERMINATION TO LIVE ENTIRELY TO GOD.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." — Acts ix. 6.

These are the words of St. Paul, when he was miraculously addressed by the grace of that Saviour whom he had persecuted. Do we not still persecute him by our pride and our passions; and when tribulation comes, and our pride is overthrown, and our self-love is confounded, shall we not say to him with perfect submission, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

It is not enough that this offer of ourselves be made in general terms only, it must include all the details of duty. It costs very little to desire perfection. We must truly desire it, more than all temporal blessings, even the most cherished and the most ardently pursued. We must not do less for the service of God than we have done for the world. Let us ask our hearts this question, Am I resolved to sacrifice to God my strongest affections, my most deeply-rooted habits, my predominating inclinations, my greatest pleasures?



TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

ON THE COMPROMISES WE WOULD MAKE WITH GOD.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?"—1 KINGS xviii. 21.
"No man can serve two masters."—MATT. vi. 24.

WE know that we must love and serve God, if we would be saved; but we are anxious to strip his service of everything burthensome and disagreeable. We wish to serve him if he demands only a few words and ceremonies; and these must be short, for we are soon wearied. We wish to love him, provided we have not to relinquish this blind love of ourselves, that amounts to idolatry, and that seems, instead of leading us to him as the Being for whom we were made, to seek him only as a resource when all other creatures fail us. We wish to love and serve him, while we are ashamed of our love for him, and hide it as though it were a weakness, and blush as if we were afraid, and thought that he was unworthy of our love; we bestow upon him some few of the externals of religion to avoid scandal. Thus we live under the control of the world, and offer nothing to God without its permission. What sort of love and service is this?

God will enter into no other covenant with us, than that in which we promise to renounce self and devote ourselves to him — than that which is contained in the first commandment, where he exacts without any reserve all our hearts, all our minds, and all our strength. If we truly love God, shall we be afraid of sacrificing too much for him? Can we love him, and be satisfied when we displease him, or without taking pains to do his will and glorify him, and being ever ready to testify courageously to the strength and sincerity of our love for him?

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

ON THE RIGHT EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

"Whilst we have time, let us do good to all."—GAL. vi. 10.
"The night cometh, when no man can work."—JOHN ix. 4.

TIME is precious, but we do not comprehend all its value. We shall know it only when it will no longer be of any advantage to us. Our friends make demands upon it, as if it were nothing, and we bestow it in the same way. Often it is a burthen to us. We know not what



to do with it. A day will come, when a single quarter of an hour may appear of more worth to us than the riches of the whole world. God, who is so free and liberal in his bounty to us in everything else, teaches us, by the wise economy of his providence, how careful we should be of the use of time; for he gives us but one instant, and withdraws that as he gives us a second, while he retains the third in his own hands, leaving us in entire uncertainty whether it will be ours.

Time is given us to prepare for eternity, and eternity will not be too long for our regrets at the loss of time, if we have misspent it. Our lives as well as our hearts belong to God; he has given them both for his service. We cannot always be doing a great work, but we can always be doing something that belongs to our condition. To be silent, to suffer, to pray when we cannot act, is acceptable to God. A disappointment, a contradiction, a harsh word received and endured as in his presence, is worth more than a long prayer; and we do not lose time if we bear its loss with gentleness and patience, provided the loss was inevitable, and was not caused by our own fault.

Thus let us spend our days, redeeming the time, by quitting vain amusements, useless correspondences, those weak outpourings of the

heart that are only modifications of self-love, and conversations that dissipate the mind, and lead to no good. Thus we shall find time to serve God; and there is none well employed that is not devoted to him.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

"Walk before me, and be thou perfect." — Gen. xvii. 1.

These are the words of God to faithful Abraham. Whoever walks in thy presence, O Lord, is in the path to perfection. We never depart from this holy way, but we lose sight of thee, and cease to behold thee in everything. Alas; where shall we go, when we no longer see thee, thee who art our light, and the only goal to which our steps should tend? To have our eyes fixed on thee in every step we take, is our only security that we shall never go astray. Faith, beaming with light amidst the darkness that surrounds us, I behold thee with thy look of holy love and trust, leading man to perfection. O God, I will fix my eyes on thee; I will behold thee in everything that is around me. The

order of thy providence shall arrest my attention. My heart shall still see thee in the midst of the busy cares of life, in all its duties, all its concerns; for they shall all be fulfilled in obedience to thy will. "I will lift my eyes unto the holy hills, whence cometh my strength."

In vain does our own foresight strive to escape the snares that surround us: danger comes from below, but deliverance only from on high. Temptations are without and within us; we should be lost, O Lord, without thee. To thee I raise my eyes, upon thee I rest my heart; my own weakness frightens me. Thy all-powerful mercy will support my infirmity.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

ON THE LOVE WHICH GOD HAS FOR US.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."—JER. xxxi. 3.

GOD has not waited for us to love him; before all time, before we were endowed with life, he thought of us, and thought of doing us good. What he meditated in eternity, he has performed in time. His beneficent hand has bestowed every variety of blessings upon us; neither our

unfaithfulness nor ingratitude has dried up the fountain of his goodness to us, or arrested the stream of his bounty.

Oh, thou Eternal Love, that hast loved me when I could neither know nor acknowledge thee; immeasurable love! that has made me what I am, that has given me all I possess, and that has as yet promised me infinitely more! Oh love, without interruption, without change, that all the bitter waters of my iniquities could not extinguish! Have I any heart, oh my God, if I am not penetrated with gratitude and love for thee?

THIRTIETH DAY.

ON THE LOVE THAT WE OUGHT TO HAVE TOWARDS GOD.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee?" — PSALM lxxii. 25.

WE often, when we say we love God with our whole soul, utter mere words; it is a sound without any sense. We learned to speak thus in our infancy, and we continue, when we grow up, without knowing what we say. To love God is to make his will ours; it is to obey faith-

fully his laws; it is to abhor sin. To love God is to love all that Jesus Christ loved, — poverty, humiliation, suffering; it is to hate what he hated, the vanities of the world, our own passions.

Can we think that we truly love an object that we do not wish to resemble? To love God is to hold a willing communion with him; it is to desire to be near to him; it is to thirst for his presence. Mankind live in a deathlike coldness. They love a little base metal, a house, a name, an airy title, a chimera that they call reputation. They love a conversation or a passing amusement. It is God alone whom they do not love; all our love is exhausted upon the most paltry things.

Would we not know the happiness of loving God? O God, reign in our hearts in spite of our infidelities; let the flame of thy holy love extinguish all other. What shall we ever find truly lovely away from thee, that we shall not find in thee, who art all perfection, and who art the source of every good?

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

ON LOVE TO GOD.

"O God of my heart, O God, my portion forever."
PSALM lxxii. 26.

CAN we know thee, O my God, and not love thee? Thee, who surpassest in greatness, and power, and goodness, and bounty, in magnificence, in all sorts of perfections, and what is more to me, in thy love for me, all that a created being can comprehend? Thou permittest me, thou commandest me to love thee. Shall the mad passions of the world be indulged with ardor, and we love thee with a cold and measured love? O no, my God; let not the profane be stronger than the divine love.

Send thy Spirit into my heart; it is open to thee, all its recesses are known to thee. Thou knowest how far it is capable of loving thee. Weak and helpless being that I am, I can give only my love; increase it, Almighty God, and render it more worthy of thee.



SHORT MEDITATIONS

UPON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

TAKEN FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

FIRST MEDITATION.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

We do not understand the Gospel; we do not comprehend its instructions; we do not penetrate its spirit. We are very curious about the teachings of men, but we neglect those of God. One word from the Gospel is worth all the other books in the world; this is the source of all truth.

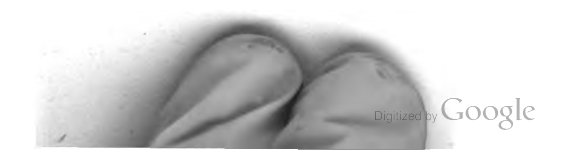
With what love, what faith, what adoration ought we to listen to the words of Jesus Christ! Henceforth let us say to him with St. Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" A single moment of self-communion, of love, and of the presence of God, will enable us to perceive and understand the truth, better than all the reasonings of men.

SECOND MEDITATION.

"Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness."

It is not surprising that our sins should be displeasing in the sight of God; but that imperfections grow even out of our virtues, this should make us tremble. Our wisdom is often only a worldly and selfish policy; our modesty a composed and hypocritical exterior, to attract praise, and for the sake of appearance; our zeal, an effect of fancy or pride; our frankness only thoughtlessness; and so on.

How do we shrink from those sacrifices, which we make to God, while they appear so meritorious in the eyes of the world! Let us beware, lest our light turn into darkness.



THIRD MEDITATION.

"Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world."

We rail at the world, but we carry the world in our hearts. The world is that multitude of people who love themselves, and who love the creatures of earth, without reference to the Creator.

We are then the world ourselves, since it means only those who love themselves, and who seek in created things the felicity only found in God. We must confess, then, that we are of the world, and that we have not the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is shameful to renounce the world in appearance, and to retain its principles;—jealousy of authority, love of reputation that we do not merit, dissipation in company, anxiety for all those indulgences that flatter the senses, cowardice in the exercise of Christian duties, a disinclination for the study of the truths of the Gospel. This is the world; it dwells within us, and we love it, while we are so anxious for its favor, and so apprehensive lest it should forget us. Happy the holy apostle, "to whom the world was crucified, and who was crucified to the world!"

FOURTH MEDITATION.

"My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth."

It is sacrificing little to relinquish this phantom, called the world; they are to be pitied, who think they lose much in quitting it. Every true Christian renounces it. It is to seek a sheltering port from the storm.

The world, it is true, promises peace, but it never gives it; it yields us some fleeting pleasures, but they cost us more than they are worth. It is the religion of Jesus alone that can give peace to man; it unites him with the Saviour; it subdues his passions, it controls his desires, it consoles him with the love of Christ; it gives him joy even in sorrow, and this is a joy that cannot be taken away

FIFTH MEDITATION.

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

The Apostle teaches us in these words, that our charity should lead us to be always attentive not to give pain to our neighbor. Without this watchfulness, charity, which droops in the world, would soon die. A word uttered with haughtiness or unkindness may overcome a weak spirit. Beings so dear to God, the friends of Jesus, should be treated by us with gentleness. If we neglect this carefulness, we are deficient in charity.

We are always attentive to those who are dear to us, and this watchful love should fill our hearts. "Feed my sheep;" these words of Jesus are applicable to us all, as an exhortation to cordiality and tenderness towards each other.

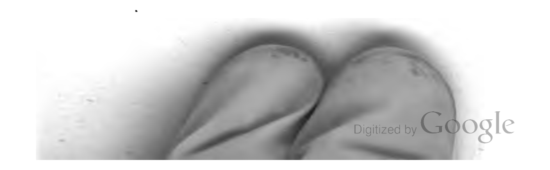
SIXTH MEDITATION.

"I am not come to be ministered unto, but to minister."

This is what every one should say, who has any authority over others. It is a ministry. We must truly serve those whom we appear to command; we must bear with their imperfections correct them with gentleness and patience, and lead them in the way to heaven.

We must be all things to all men; consider ourselves as made for them; soften by our humility the most necessary reproofs; never be discouraged, and pray God to give that change of heart, which we cannot produce by our efforts.

Let us examine ourselves in relation to those who are committed to our care, and for whom we are accountable to God.



SEVENTH MEDITATION.

"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

It could have been the Son of God alone, who could have given us this divine lesson. What has he not done for the love of us? What has he not suffered, what does he not still feel for us? He was led like a victim to the slaughter, and no one heard him complain; and we complain at the slightest evils; we are sensitive, irritable, and proud.

There is no true and constant gentleness without humility; while we are so fond of ourselves, we are easily offended with others. Let us be persuaded that nothing is due to us, and then nothing will disturb us. Let us often think of our own infirmities, and we shall become indulgent towards those of others. Let us apply to our hearts these sublime and touching words of the Son of God: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Do we desire glory? let us seek it in its true place; let us seek that which will endure forever. Oh noble ambition, to dwell eternally with the Son of God! But how weak, how childish, this eager desire for distinction in the world; for a name, a reputation, more evanescent than the vapor that is the sport of the winds! Is a vain show worth so much pains?

Let us aspire after true greatness, that is only found in humility. God rebukes the proud even in this world, and in the world to come they are abased; but the humble, even in this life, shall receive the respect that they have not sought for, and eternal glory shall be the recompense of their contempt of false and perishing honors.



NINTH MEDITATION.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh."

We sleep in peace in the arms of God, when we yield ourselves up to his providence, in a delightful consciousness of his tender mercies; no more restless uncertainties, no more anxious desires, no more impatience at the place we are in; for it is God who has put us there, and who holds us in his arms. Can we be unsafe where he has placed us, and where he watches over us as a parent watches a child? This confiding repose, in which earthly care sleeps, is the true vigilance of the heart; yielding itself up to God, with no other support than him, it thus watches while we sleep. This is the love of him, that will not sleep even in death.

TENTH MEDITATION.

"Teach us to pray."

Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of thee; thou lovest me better than I can love myself. Oh, my Father, give to thy child that which he knows not how to ask. I dare not pray either for crosses or consolations: I present myself before thee, I open my heart to thee. Behold those wants that I know not myself. See and do according to thy tender mercy.

I adore thy will without knowing it. I am silent before thee: I yield myself up; I would sacrifice myself to thy will; I would have no other desire than to do it. Teach me to pray, pray thyself in me.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

"Lord, thou knowest that I love thee

SAINT PETER said this to our Lord; but shall we dare to say it? Can we love him, of whom we do not think? What friend have we, of whom we had not rather speak? Where are we more wearied than at the foot of his altar? What do we do to please our Master, and to render ourselves what he wishes us to be? What do we do for his glory? What have we sacrificed to him? Do we prefer him even to our lowest interest, to our most unworthy pleasures? Where, then, is our love for him?

Unhappy, however, are those who do not love the Lord Jesus, who has so loved us. If we do love him, can we be insensible to all his benefits? "Neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

"It is the Lord who leads me; I shall want nothing."

How weak it is in us to seek anything but God! While we have the source of all good, we think ourselves poor. We desire to find, even in piety, earthly consolations. We look upon it rather as a softener of the ills that we must endure, than as a state of renunciation and sacrifice of self. From this arise our discouragements. Let us begin by yielding ourselves up to the will of God. When serving him, let us have no anxiety about what he will do for us. A little more or a little less suffering in this short life, will be but of little consequence.

What can I want, if God is with me, yes, God himself! he is the infinite and the only good. Vanish, all ye false goods of earth, unworthy of the name you bear, and often only making men wicked. God alone is good, he who ever dwells in my soul. Let him deprive me of my pleasures, of riches, honor, power, friends, health, and life, while he does not estrange himself from my heart, I shall still be



rich, I shall have lost nothing, I shall have preserved my all.

The Lord has sought me in my wanderings, has loved me when I have not loved him, has regarded me with compassion, notwithstanding my ingratitude. I am in his hands, I feel my weakness and his strength; with such a support I shall want nothing.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

"Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls."

ALMIGHTY GOD, I come to be instructed at thy feet. Thou art present, thou callest me by thy tender mercies; speak, Lord, thy servant heareth. O, Eternal Majesty, I come before thee to receive everything I desire from thee, and to renounce myself without reserve.

Send me, O my God, thy Holy Spirit; let it become mine; I would open my heart to this spirit of love and truth; let it enlighten me, let it teach me to be meek and lowly. O Jesus, it is thou who hast given me this lesson of gentleness and humility. Thou teachest me to find in it rest to my soul. Alas, how far I have been from finding this peace! I have sought it in the vain imaginations of pride, but pride is incompatible with peace; it is ever desiring what it does not possess; it wishes to pass for what it is not; it ever exalts itself, and God continually resists it, by the envy and contradictions it meets in the world, or by its own imperfections which it cannot help feeling. Unhappy pride, that can never know the peace of the children of God, who are meek and lowly of heart.



FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

THIS, O Lord, is what thy servant Job said in the excess of his sufferings. It is thy mercy that has put these precious words into the heart and lips of a sinner like me. Thou gavest me health, and I forgot thee; thou deprivest me of it, and I return to thee. Blessed be God, who has taken away his gifts, to bring me to himself.

O Lord, deprive me of all else, but restore to me thyself. All things are thine, thou art the Lord. Take from me riches, honor, health; everything that would separate me from thee.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

"Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

O my God! what is death or life to me? Life is nothing; it is even a snare, if it be too dear to me. Death can only destroy this house of clay; it delivers the soul from the contamination of the body, and from its own pride. It frees it from the influence of the tempter, and introduces it forever into the kingdom of truth.

I ask not, then, O my Father, for health or for life. I make an offering to thee of all my days. Thou has counted them. I would know nothing more. All I ask, is to die rather than live as I have lived; and if it be thy will that I depart, let me die in patience and love. Almighty God, who holdest the keys of the tomb in thy hand, to open and close it at thy will, give me not life if I shall love it too well. Living or dying, I would be thine.

GENERAL PRAYER.

O God! so great, yet so intimately with us, so far above these heavens, and yet so near to the lowest of thy creatures, filling immensity, and yet dwelling in the bottom of my heart, so terrible and yet so worthy of love, when will thy children cease to be ignorant of thee? Oh! that I might find a voice loud enough to reproach the world for its blindness; and to declare with authority all that thou art. When we tell men to seek thee in their own hearts, it is easier for them to seek thee in the most distant parts of the world. What is more unknown, and more remote, from vain and dissipated men, than their own hearts? Do they know what it is, to enter into themselves? Have they ever sought the way? Can they imagine what it is, this inward sanctuary, this impenetrable depth of the soul, where thou wilt be worshipped in spirit and in truth? They dwell far off in the objects of their ambition and their vain pleasures.

Alas! how shall they listen to heavenly truths, since, as Jesus Christ has said, they do not regard even earthly truth? For me, O my Cre-



ator! shutting my eyes to external things, which are only vanity and vexation of spirit, I would commune with thee, in my secret heart, through thy Son Jesus Christ.

O God! we do not know thee. It is by thee that we live, that we think, that we enjoy; and we forget Him from whom come all things. We see nothing but through thee, the universal lignt; by thee alone we see anything; and yet we see not thee thyself. It is thou who givest all; to the stars their light, to the fountains their waters and their courses, to the earth its plants, to the fruits their flavor, to the flowers their splendor and their perfume, to all nature its abundance and its beauty. To man thou givest health, reason, thou givest him all things; thou doest all; thou rulest over all. I see only thee; all other things are but as shadows before the eyes of him who has once seen thee; and the world does not see thee! But alas! he who has not seen thee, has seen nothing; he has passed his life in the illusion of a dream; he is as if he were not — more unhappy still, for as I learn from thy word it had been better for him that he had not been born.

O God! when shall we return love for love? When shall we seek him who ever seeks us, and whose arms are ever around us? It is in thy paternal bosom that we forget thee. The



blessings we every moment receive from thee, instead of touching our hearts, turn our thoughts away from thee. Thou art the source of all happiness; thy creatures are only the channels through which it flows; and the stream leads us away from the fountain. This boundless love follows us everywhere, and we flee from it. It is everywhere, and we do not perceive it. We think ourselves alone when we are only with God. He does all for us, and we do not trust in him; we despair when we have no other resource than his providence, and count for nothing infinite love, and infinite power.

EVENING PRAYER.

O LORD! watch over me, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Alas! this day, has it not been void of good works? In it we might have gained everlasting life, and we have lost it in vain pleasures. Perhaps it may be the last of a life undeserving of thy mercy. O fool! perhaps this very night Jesus may come to demand of thee thy soul, the image of the great God, which thou hast disfigured by sin.

O Lord! grant that whilst I sleep, thy love may watch over me, and keep guard around my heart. I am the prodigal son; I have wandered far away into a strange land, where I have lost all my inheritance. I am starving, and a beggar; but I know what I will do; I will return to my Father; I will say to him, O my Father! I have sinned against heaven and against thee. Art thou not the good shepherd who leaves his flock to go into the desert after a single wandering sheep? Hast thou not declared that there is joy in heaven over a single sinner who repents? Thou wilt not then despise an humble and contrite heart.

O Lord! watch over my spirit while I wake, and my body while I sleep, that I may sleep in peace and awake in Jesus. Pity my weakness. Send thy holy angels, spirit of light, that they may keep far from me the spirit of evil that is ever around me. Grant that I may resist it with the courage of faith. Give penitence to sinners, perseverance to the just, and peace to the dead. Let my evening prayer rise to thee, O Lord; and let thy blessing descend upon me.

PRAYER TO GOD.

O MY GOD! while so many of thy children are unconscious of thy presence in this glorious scene of nature that thou presentest to them, still thou art not far from any one of them. Thou art near us, but we do not perceive thee; our passions blind us. Thus, O Lord, thy light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. Thou discoverest thyself everywhere, but men do not see thee. All nature speaks of thee, and resounds with thy most holy name; but its voice is uttered to deafened ears — they will not hear. Thou art near them and within them, but they fly from themselves and from thee. They would find thee, O thou eternal and holy light, fountain of all pure and unfailing felicity, life of all true existence, if they would seek thee within their souls. But alas! thy good gifts that declare the bounty of the giver, turn their attention from the hand that bestows them. They live in thee without thinking of thee; or rather they die, for to be ignorant of thee is death. Thou supportest them in the arms of thy mercy, and they are unconscious of it. It is because thou art within them, in the temple of the soul into

which they never enter, that thou art hidden from them.

The order and beauty of the creation is like a veil that hides thee from their weak vision. The light that should enlighten blinds them. Thou art too high and too pure to be perceived by their gross senses. The earthly-minded cannot comprehend thee. Frightful darkness that envelops the children of men! when they can see only shadows, and even truth appears a phantom; when what is nothing seems all to them, and what is everything is as nothing to them. What do I see in all nature? God! God is everything, and God alone! Who does not see thee, has seen nothing. He is as if he were not, and his whole life is as a dream. Sorrow to the soul, that has not seen thee, that is far from God, without hope, without consolation! But blessed already are they who seek thee, who thirst for thee! Unspeakable the felicity of those, who rejoice in thy immediate presence, from whose eyes thou hast wiped away every tear, and whose hearts are filled with thy love and presence!



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